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ELEMENTS OF ART,
A POEM;

IN
SIX CANTOS;

WITH
NOTES AND A PREFACE;

INCLUDING STRICTURES ON THE
STATE OF THE ARTS, CRITICISM, PATRONAGE,
AND PUBLIC TASTE.

BY
(517) MARTIN ARCHER SHEE, R. A.

At melius fuerat non scribere ; namque tacere
Tutum semper erit.

SCALIGER.

What scribblers ! pardon'd once, resume the pen,
Forbearance brave, and rashly rhyme again !

CANTO SIXTH.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following pages contain, in six cantos, the three remaining books of a poem, which was printed some time since, under the title of "Rhymes on Art."

Why the present publication has been so long deferred, after the indulgent reception of that little essay, may perhaps, be thought to require some explanation; though it seems rather unnecessary, to account for the late appearance of that, the non-appearance of which at all, would probably, be as little remarked as regretted.

The Author however, owes it to those who have honoured him by enquiring for his work, as well as to his own feelings of gratitude for the liberality which he has experienced, to say a few words on the subject: particularly, as the delay seemed to strengthen an impression, which

some persons were not unwilling to receive, that either, no more of the work existed, and the idea of a continuation, was suggested to divert the attention from its evident incompleteness; or the Author feared to risk in a second adventure, the little credit which he had obtained by his first.

The Author is willing to flatter himself, that those who know him, will acquit him of the artifice expressed in the one, or the apprehension supposed in the other of these imputations. The defects which he cannot excuse by candor, he will never attempt to cover by finesse; and he hopes, he is not so far blinded by his vanity, to the true character of the little commendation he has received, as to mistake the marks of indulgence, for the stamp of desert.

The whole of his work had been composed for a considerable time, before the Author formed the resolution, or found the opportunity to revise a part of it for the press. When he published "Rhymes on Art," and for some time afterwards, he certainly, from the confined nature of the subject, as well as from his distrust of the skill with which it was treated, had no expectation, that the reception of his little volume would

be such, as to induce him to bring forward the larger portion of the poem which remained. His manuscript therefore, lay by him untouched, till the kindness of the public encouraged him to think, it might be offered to their perusal without the risk of imprudence, or the charge of presumption.

When however, he commenced the task of preparation, he found, that the occasional leisure hours afforded by an arduous profession, though they might suffice for the composition, were not sufficient for the correction of an extensive work. Rhymes are something like recruits, which may be raised in all situations, but to fit them for service, requires the convenience of a parade, and the discipline of a drill. He was therefore, obliged to postpone the printing of his book, till circumstances should enable him to devote a month or six weeks to its undisturbed consideration

The autumn of last year, furnished him with the first opportunity, of which he could avail himself for that purpose, and he now submits to the reader the result of his revisal.

Some introductory lines have been added at

the commencement of the first canto ; and the name of the work has been changed, out of respect to those liberal critics of the former volume, who judged so favourably of its merits, as to think it disparaged by the title.

When the Author considers the nature and extent of the design, which he had originally proposed to himself, in writing on the subject of his art, he feels, that he has but little claim to that measure of modesty, which the “humility of his title” has been supposed to display. In the ambitious arrogance of youth, he had projected a work, of which, to have thought himself equal to the due execution, certainly argued as little diffidence as discretion.

In one poem, of four parts, he had intended to treat at large, of the rise, progress, present state, and principles of painting. The first part was to have unfolded its origin, progress, and perfection amongst the ancients. The second, its revival and advancement amongst the Italians, Flemish, and French. The third, its rise, progress, and present state in Britain ; and the fourth, was to have been devoted to a didactic essay on its principles and powers.

Upon this plan however, the Author had not proceeded far, before he discovered, that his ambition surpassed his ability; and that he had neither learning nor leisure sufficient for the task which he had proposed. The subject so branched around him in all directions; such "a swarm of topics settled on his pen," that he shrunk from his undertaking, contracted his views, and contented himself with attempting to erect a small didactic lodge on the site of the poetical palace which he had projected.

The volume therefore, which he now presents to the public, with that which preceded it, completes the project of his humbler hopes; although the two, include but a small portion of his original design.

Notwithstanding that the Author expressly stated, in the preface to *Rhymes on Art*, the didactic nature of his poem, he finds, that of those who have done him the honour to think of it at all, the greater number expect, in his present work, a continuation of "the remonstrance of the painter," and look for nothing but satire, expostulation, and complaint. But though he is fully convinced, that a theme so prolific as the frivolous

pursuits, false taste, and pedantry of the day, might well run unexhausted through two volumes of ridicule and reproof; and though he confesses, he could behold with some satisfaction, the ludicrous writhings of folly and vanity, under the operation of those wholesome correctives; yet, he is far from supposing himself qualified, to administer such a persevering castigation.

Whatever appears in his work of a satirical character, is incidental to it. His plan is preceptive; and though he has occasionally, ventured to let fly a few shots at the enemy, when they came in his way, he by no means intended to come to close quarters, or presumed to call the attention of the public to a pitched battle, in which his prowess is but little calculated to contribute to their sport. His rhymes, like raw levies, can be safely employed only in distant skirmishing, and are not fit for a general engagement.

Concerning the contents of his present volume, the Author has but little to observe: as the title announces, they refer principally, to those early periods of study, for the direction of which, former writers, have in a great measure,

neglected to provide. His work has no pretensions to be considered as a regular treatise on painting; nor does it aspire to instruct the enlightened Connoisseur, or the accomplished Artist. To the undisciplined tyro of Taste he would address himself: he takes up the student in the weak and helpless moments of inexperience; when, an infant in the nursery of Art, he begins to feel his feet and moves in tottering apprehension: when all is doubt and indecision—eagerness without object, and impetuosity without force or direction. He would, in short, furnish the young painter with a guide, of which, at a similar period of study, the Author himself experienced the want: a guide, which though it may not secure him from error, or conduct him to excellence, will at least tend to open the country to his view, to lead him in the tracks of common sense, and stimulate his powers, if it cannot strengthen them.

Minds occupied in the pursuits of Taste, are peculiarly subject to intervals of weariness and depression. The strongest powers cannot always bear up against unexpected obstructions; or preserve an equality of ardor amidst the vicissi-

tudes of hope and despair. For this occasional lassitude—this intermitting torpor of the faculties, the most effectual remedy, is perhaps, found in books, or conversations on the subjects of our study. Through these mediums are discovered, new lands of promise, new springs of hope, and fresh sources of consolation. The mental powers are still busied about their most important objects; they are refined as well as refreshed, and exercised even in the moment of relaxation.

Amongst Artists, there is not perhaps an individual of talent or feeling, but will confess, that he has never risen from the perusal of a rational work, or the enjoyment of a liberal conversation on the subject of his art, without finding his emulation excited, his ardor rekindled, and his resolution new strung. The confidence of the painter in his own powers revives, in proportion as he discovers, that embarrassments which he supposed peculiar to himself, are common to all; that others encounter the same difficulties, and suffer under similar apprehensions; soar like him, in elation, and sink like him, in dismay. His genius is warmed with new zeal, and wound up to a higher pitch of enterprize; he

returns to the charge with redoubled alacrity, till new efforts produce new languors, and expectation again subsides in despondency.

Considered in this view, the biography of eminent men, the works which treat of art and science, may be said to be useful, even when they cannot be considered as deeply instructive: they keep up our ardor at least, if they do not increase our information. Heroes have been roused to arms by the recounted exploits of a Turenne or a Marlborough, and the playful garulity of Richardson is reported to have awakened the genius of a Reynolds.

Productions of this kind, when they contain no gross or dangerous errors, will always employ to advantage the hours of leisure and lassitude, and often effect as an amusement, that benefit which they fail to accomplish by instruction.

Upon which of these grounds the Author will be allowed to rest his claim to the attention of the public, or whether he may not be thought deficient on both, it is not for him to anticipate; he fears however, that the didactic poet who does not succeed in amusing his reader, will teach him to little purpose.

The present essay, is intended but as preparatory to a higher course of instruction—as introductory to the study of a Fresnoy, and a Reynolds. The Author considers himself only as the humble usher, to conduct the student into the presence of those, who are better qualified to be the guides of his maturity, and the models of his imitation.

To enliven the dulness of continued precept, and add variety to illustration, characters have been interspersed wherever the subject seemed to admit of such assistance. But however it may diminish the interest of this part of his work, the Author must disclaim here, as he has disclaimed in his former volume, all intention of pointing to individuals.

Since the days of Theophrastus, to the present moment, no man has ever sketched a character, however arbitrary or fanciful, without being supposed to have had a model in his eye, and to have painted from nature, rather than imagination. This seems a consequence inseparable from the nature of the case. It is not easy to cast a censure that will not stick somewhere, or to strike at a defect without hitting

somebody ; and if a single feature can be tortured to a resemblance, malignity never fails to appropriate the whole face. To strip off the supposed disguises of policy ; to penetrate the artful coverts of allusion, and drag a lurking likeness into day, is a gratification of spleen as well as an exercise of sagacity ; and satire is perhaps never more acceptable, than when we think we have fixed its point, and can fasten upon an individual that which belongs to the species.

The Author has endeavoured to disappoint, as far as possible, this kind of malevolent ingenuity. The integrity of the moralist however, would be but little commended, who should refrain from censuring the vices of his time, lest the guilty should suppose themselves glanced at. Duty is the last sacrifice that should be made to delicacy ; and we shall in vain attempt to vindicate the right, if we have not the courage to condemn the wrong. He who offends against the principles of morality or taste, has reason to think himself fortunate, if he be allowed to escape in a general censure ; if, in

the vigilant animadversions of the pulpit or the press, he be not singled out as an illustration, and satirized as an example.

In the names of his characters, as well as their qualities, the Author has carefully avoided every thing that might be construed as a personal allusion ; he has personified particular defects, not satirised particular persons. Thus the bigotted votary of design and outline, he represents in the character of Timanthes ; the advocate for colouring in that of Panæus ; the indiscriminating follower of nature, as Euphranor ; and the prejudiced worshipper of the antique, in that of Torso : ascribing to each, such defects in art, as experience proves, to result commonly, from his peculiar prejudices.

This principle has governed him through the various characters, which he has attempted to delineate ; and the members of his profession will readily believe, that, had he been disposed to turn poetical portrait-painter, however he might have succeeded in the picture, he would not have failed in the likeness. Indeed if he thought the following pages contained one

character which could be justly considered, as intended to describe an individual, he would not hesitate to blot it from his book.

In the present, as well as in his former publication, the Author has been tempted to enlarge occasionally, upon the subject which first emboldened him to appear before the public in a literary shape ; and the just claims of the Arts to participate in the patronage of the State, with other objects of utility or glory, are discussed freely, whenever the natural course of his reflections afforded the opportunity.

In a preface to the second edition of *Rhymes on Art*, written in 1805, the Author, while offering a just tribute of acknowledgment to the liberal Founders of the British Institution, observed, that “there would be reason to regret should the Government (in consequence of their exertions) hold itself exonerated from all interference in favour of the Arts.”

This observation proceeded from the conviction, that the public feeling was not sufficiently alive to the importance of the objects which occasioned the formation of that establishment, to co-operate effectually for their attainment.

If, at the time when this remark was written, any doubts were entertained as to its justice, what has occurred since that period, must have served effectually to remove them. When we consider how little the zeal, the example, and the exertions of those elevated and enlightened characters, which have interested themselves in the success of the British Institution, have been able to effect, for the advancement of historical art, it is impossible to resist the conviction, that unless the Government can be induced to shew some sensibility towards their interests, the Arts, as liberal ornaments and moral agents, as instruments to promote the refinement and preserve the fame of a people, must, at no very distant period, be utterly extinguished amongst us.

The founders of the British Institution are justly entitled to the regard and gratitude of the Artist, for their exertions in his cause: they have rescued him from the illiberal prejudices of the collector, and the interested depreciation of the picture-dealer. That few are inclined to encourage the productions of modern Art, is an evil, which they perhaps, have not the power

to remedy ; but that no man's taste is now interested to decry them, must be attributed entirely to their influence.

After the experience which they have had however, these enlightened friends of Art, must be convinced of the utter inadequacy of their present plan, to effect the objects for which their establishment appears to have been formed. What we had a right to expect, in times like these, from the unaided efforts of private liberality they have performed : and if persons of their high rank, fortune, and station, zealously co-operating for the advancement of art, can offer no more powerful stimulus, to the historic genius of the country, than a possibility of sale in the British Gallery, or a chance of gaining a prize of fifty pounds ; what hopes remain for the pencil of him, whose unaccommodating ambition will not allow him, to toil for six months in imitating the bloom of a peach, or the twill of a Turkey carpet ? What more decisive proof can be desired, that the resources of private patronage are exhausted, or diverted to other objects ; and that to the interference of the State only, the eye of Taste can be now directed,

either for the proper stimulus, or the adequate remuneration of Genius ?

But the patriotic zeal of those who have stepped forward in favour of the Arts, will not be checked by difficulties, which their sagacity, from the apathy of the public in matters of Taste, must have in a great measure anticipated. They will not suffer to be frustrated, the benefits which they have proposed, nor the hopes which they have excited. They will add new levers to the machine which they have so honourably set in motion, and at length, stir those powers of the state, which have been so long immovable by every other application. After the exertions which they have made, it is impossible to doubt of their zeal ; and when their rank and consequence in society are considered, their influence must appear as irresistible, as the cause which calls for it is worthy of their protection, and important to the character of their country.

Wherever, in the following pages, the Author has touched on topics connected with this subject, he has spoken his sentiments without reserve. He who has no personal views to promote, under the mask of public objects, has no occasion

for management, or finesse, and should scorn to degrade his cause by adulation. He would not dishonour the Arts by urging their interests in the whine of supplication. What they may not claim from the wisdom of the statesman, they have no right to expect from his generosity; and if they cannot propitiate his patriotism by their deserts, they should disdain to plead as paupers to his commiseration.

If, amongst the various discoveries of modern times, our sagacity should have at length found out, that the Arts have no pretensions to the consideration or protection of the state: if the policy of every great statesman, from Pericles to Mæcenas, and from Mæcenas to Colbert, be now perceived to be erroneous, if it be no longer deemed the duty of those who direct the affairs of nations, to bestow a thought upon the cultivation of Literature and Taste,—to call forth the genius, or consult the reputation of their country: if all that can ennoble the nature of man, or immortalise the memory of empires, must now be cast into the vortex of vulgar interests, and left without an effort, to sink or swim, in the gloomy tempest of politics and party, the victims of

Taste and Literature, cannot be too soon acquainted with their fate, that they may humble their hopes before the wisdom of their age, and prepare for contempt and degradation.

But some of the Author's more prudent brethren will call this, indiscretion; will again, as on the occasion of his former work, with a grave face lament his rashness, and prophesy with great feeling, that no good can arise from it to the Arts, and much evil must result to the Author. To these wary sons of circumspection, who even think in way of trade, and never speak but on speculation, the Author certainly owes no deference, and desires from them no commendation.

Selfish and servile, they are insensible to the public claims of their profession, because they are conscious of no public spirit in themselves. They would petition for the Artist, but would not expostulate for the Art. They would solicit without dignity, what they would receive without desert, and abuse without hesitation. They would calumniate the genius of our age, and sacrifice the best interests of their Art, for the pleasure of decrying the credit of those, who

have the spirit to defend them. To gain the smile of a great man, or the chance of a commission, they would take part with all the prejudices of Taste, and prostitute the name of patron to every picture-dealer of the day.

Whatever may be his faults or his feebleness as an advocate, the Author has the satisfaction to reflect, that the cause has not been injured by his means ; and as the patriotic anxiety of those pupils of policy, must be now somewhat allayed on this head, it is to be hoped, that their sensibility will not suffer much from a consideration of those ill consequences to the Author, which they have so kindly suggested. He can assure them, that he has no fears for himself, and if the adoption of their sentiments were to be made a condition essential to his success, he would spurn the degrading stipulation, and exclaim,

“ Let Fortune do her worst ! I cannot choose

“ To prosper in such company.”

They whose taste and liberality the Author respects, and whose approbation he zealously desires, will know how to distinguish between

the honest warmth of him who pleads for general interests, and the smiling hypocrisy of those who study only their own.

But he who cannot make up his mind to neglect and discouragement, has no business to be, in times like these, a poet or a painter ; and as the Author's perverse ambition has exposed him to the disadvantages which attach to both those characters, he will not, if it should be necessary, shrink from the consequences of his folly or his fate.

He is however, sheltered in the mediocrity of his pretensions ; as he does not aspire to the honours, neither is he exposed to the hazards of those, who dignify by daring enterprize, the pencil and the lyre. His humble efforts with these instruments will not suffer in the estimation of the public, from the zeal with which he has ventured to advance the claims of those who do more credit to their art, and deserve better of their country.

If the liberality were at as low an ebb as the patronage of the day ; if the Arts, in their best interests, were not only neglected and disre-

garded, but even their complaints were to be repelled as offensive and their advocates considered as presumptuous,

Why then 'twere time to seek some humble trade,
To seize the plough, the shuttle, or the spade ;
To rush from scenes by fear and pride debased,
And leave to sycophants—the curse of taste.

If the Author did not dread the evil of a long preface, he would be tempted to say something in excuse for his long notes. They certainly have far exceeded his intentions, and appear too often, rather as principals than appendages. A little more experience of the press, would perhaps, have enabled him to calculate better, and compress his annotative exuberance within the limits of typographic propriety.

A distinguished writer of the present day, (Mr. Cumberland) has so strongly condemned the practice of writing notes, that the Author, who will, he fears, be found an unconscionable culprit in this respect, would shrink before the vigour and variety of illustration with which that censure is enforced, if he had not precedent to plead in his defence. To say the truth however, he has not much respect for this

species of justification, and if no better can be drawn from the nature of didactic works in general, and the advantage of support and elucidation, which the subject may receive from this kind of running accompaniment, he must without further observation, throw himself on the discretion of the court.

To the unbiassed judgment of the public on this, as well as every other part of the case which he now presents for investigation, it is the Author's duty to bow with submissive respect. The indulgence which he has already experienced, has operated as a claim on his exertion, not as a pledge of his security; and has excited his gratitude without encreasing his confidence.

Though some palliation of occasional negligence might possibly be allowed to him, on the plea of professional employment, yet he hopes that inattention will not be found to be a frequent cause of his defects. In preparing for the press a work, which appeared to his inexperience, both extensive and embarrassing, he certainly, felt the inconvenience which may be supposed to have resulted from the unavoidable avocations

of his art. But though his leisure moments only, could be devoted to his literary views, he should think it presumptuous to print what they have produced, if he could not at the same time acknowledge that no want of time or care can be urged in excuse for its imperfection.

He who has not the opportunity to study his work, should not have the temerity to publish it. If defects of inability are censurable, defects of negligence are insulting. An author is commonly an intruder upon his readers, and should take care to prove, that he has omitted nothing in his power, which can render his presence acceptable, or shew his respect for the company : but what must be thought of his discretion, who, though he comes uncalled, confesses himself to be unprepared ?

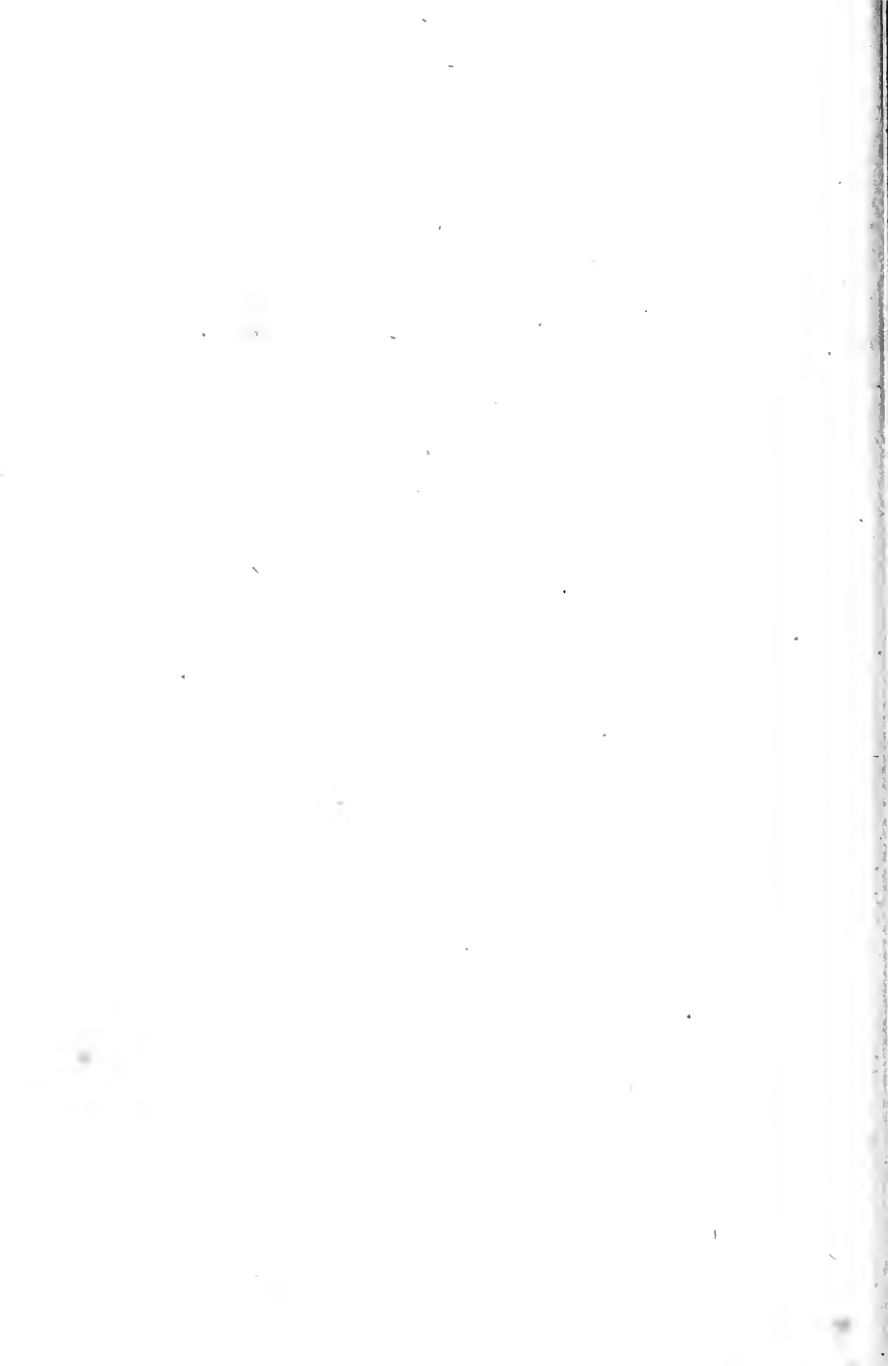
No man has a right to amuse himself at the public expense, which he may be justly said to do, who obtrudes upon our attention, what he admits to be the sport of his recreation, rather than the fruit of his industry.

The Author has now completed his literary voyage, but he cannot expect to discharge his lading, without paying the customs of criticism.

Though not a regular trader, he hopes he will not be found to have gone much out of his course; and in taking leave of a service, in which he is conscious he must appear as

“A lounging landsman, awkward at the oar;”
he shall think himself fortunate, if his goods be not condemned as contraband of Taste, and his owners should be no losers by their speculation.

ELEMENTS OF ART.



CANTO FIRST.

ARGUMENT.

Allusion to the Author's former publication—invocation to Taste, as the presiding power that directs the operations of the poet and the painter—inefficiency of labour without genius in the Arts—utility of rules and precepts—judgment the guide of Genius—particularly required by the young painter, to conduct him through the perplexities of Taste—salutary influence of common sense—superior opportunities of the poet, in having always at his command the best models of his art—the Student in painting rarely possessed of this advantage, and commonly secluded from the study of the old masters—his consequent errors—the delusions to which he is exposed, from the prejudices of those to whom he must apply for direction;—contrarieties of Taste exemplified in the characters of Timanthes, Panæus, Euphranor, and Torso—the Student cautioned to beware of the opinions of those who recommend extremes in art, and ascribe to some one merit a disproportionate importance—the diligent study of design recommended—an early use of the palette also proposed—the pencil and the portcrayon correctives of each other—the advantages which result from carrying on together the practice of both—the study of ancient sculpture stated, as the school of Beauty and Grace—a standard of proportion first formed by the Greeks, and unequalled by the ability of latter times—propriety of drawing attentively from the living model—defects which always result from designing exclusively after sculpture, and advantages which are derived from the study of the living figure, in qualifying the dryness of style which is often occasioned by an injudicious devotion to the antique.

ELEMENTS OF ART.

CANTO I.

Non mihi Pieridum chorus hic, nec Apollo vocandus

.....
.....

Ornari præcepta negent, contenta doceri.

FRESNOY.

TH O' weak of wing, and scarce above the ground
Her former flight, the Muse some favour found ;
Her cause attracted where her skill had fail'd,
The Painter's, not the Poet's art prevail'd.
But now her theme to still more humble strains 5
Imperious calls, where thoughtful precept reigns ;
Delivering slow, in rough sententious rhyme,
What observation draws from toil and time.

Yet, may the Muse, tho' still her course she trace
In technic trammels, and didactic pace, 10
Collect some flow'rets as she plods along,
Should Taste propitious smile upon the song.

Spirit of heaven ! descending to adorn
Life's brighter days, of peace and order born ;

Line 13. *Spirit of heaven ! descending to adorn*]—Taste is a quality more easily personified than explained. Philosophers and critics are still so little agreed about its properties and principles, that the poet and the painter may be excused if, having created an imaginary personage so important to their functions, they invest her with such attributes as are congenial with her general character, and prefer to invoke, rather than investigate, her powers. If the influence of Taste upon the British public were indeed, in any reasonable degree, proportionate to the discussions which it has produced, we should certainly rank high in the scale of national refinement : but, unluckily, in matters which seem to depend more on feeling than on reasoning, on sentiment rather than on science, the most ingenious theories, the most profound speculations, have but little practical operation ; and what the poet and the painter cannot effect for the general advancement of Taste, will be looked for in vain from the philosopher and the metaphysician.

Thus there is, perhaps, no civilized people of modern

—In human hearts when hunted from his lair, 15
No more the gloomy savage harbours there ;
When Reason's ray the clouded soul has clear'd,
When Science long has labour'd—Art appear'd,

Europe amongst whom the principles of Taste have been less generally diffused than amongst us, or more philosophically investigated ; and although the acquirements of individuals have been amply sufficient to disprove the absurd imputations which foreign theorists have presumed to cast upon our climate, yet it must be confessed, that, as a nation, we have not evinced that degree of sensibility towards the productions of art, which has usually characterized the refinement of other countries. How far the laudable exertions of the few who consider this general disregard of the interests of Taste as a stigma upon our reputation, may succeed in removing it, cannot at present be decided : but there is much reason to fear, that while the Government continues to set the fashion of apathy and indifference, it will not cease to prevail amongst that numerous class of society, who think their coldness excused under the sanction of such an authority. To this description of persons the observation of Vitruvius, as quoted by De Piles, may be justly applied, "*Propter ignorantiam artis virtutes obscurantur*;" and it is to be seriously lamented, that neither the impulse of feeling, nor the impressions of duty, are found to operate on those in elevated and official

—Time form'd a temple for the guest divine,
And Virtue's incense purified the shrine. 20
Then, pure-eyed Taste ! thou deign'st, celestial Power !
To smile on man's ameliorating hour ;

stations, from whom a more enlightened policy and liberal example in this respect, might be reasonably required.

An ignorance of the most obvious principles of Taste is indeed considered to be no impeachment of polite education. The minister at the helm, the judge from the bench, and the senator in debate, have been known to avow without a blush, their deficiency on this subject. The scholar too, who looks with contempt on those who are not as familiar as himself, with the history and poetry of Homer or Virgil, scarcely knows that such men as Raphael and Rubens have existed ; and while he explores with rapturous anxiety the half obliterated inscription on an ancient marble, considers the sculptor as a mechanic, and the statue as a stone.

This insensibility to the objects of Taste, and the little value attached to the studies with which they are connected, by the more enlightened orders of society, are great obstacles to the general diffusion of knowledge on the subject. We must be sensible of our defects before we can hope to remove them ; and they who neither feel nor regret the want of Taste, are not likely to take much trouble to acquire it.

Although the pride of erudition may possibly start at the

Then from the skies, while every Muse precedes,
And Fancy's train the ethereal triumph leads,
While each young Grace in rapture's measure springs,
And clustering Cupids float on filmy wings ; 26

idea, it may be questioned, whether an acquaintance with the Taste of the Greeks would not be as useful as with their literature : whether a student would not be as beneficially employed in learning the principles of their design, as the rudiments of their grammar : in short, whether that which was considered so essential a part of *their* polite education, might not be advantageously introduced into *ours* ; and an English gentleman derive as much credit from an intercourse with their arts as their language.

Mr. Hoare, in his "Enquiry," &c. has suggested the propriety of making the regular study of the arts of design an elementary part of public education ; and proposed the appointment of professors in painting for that purpose in our Universities. Mr. Thomas Hope, also, in a paper published in "the Artist," has expressed sentiments of a similar tendency. It is indeed extraordinary, that painting should ever have been excluded from establishments in which the sister arts of poetry and music were received with honour, and invested with the robes of academical dignity. If we consider the arts of design, with respect to their influence on the manners, the morals, the utilities, and the ornaments of life, they will be found to possess no inferior claim to distinction : and should the judgment of the ancients

Then Goddess ! then, while Beauty bends, with Youth,
 And Wisdom woos thee to the bower of Truth,
 Thou comest to Genius—comest in all thy charms,
 Blest in his love, and bright'ning in his arms. 30
 As erst, fair Eve in Adam's eye bestow'd
 A richer bloom o'er Eden's pure abode ;
 Of thee enamour'd, as he roves around,
 Thou makest life's rudest wild, enchanted ground :
 Whether the Muse allures him to the shades, 35
 Where meditation courts the tuneful maids ;
 Or, touch'd by music's power, the shell he tries,
 While crowding round responsive passions rise.
 But chief his soul when Painting's glories sway,
 Thou lovest thro' nature's walks to lead his way ; 40

(an authority seldom questioned by the learned) be admitted in their favour, the dignity of erudition would not be impaired by their association. If that particular class of students, whose pride and occupation it is, to explore the languages of ancient times, and whom we, *par éminence*, call scholars, had been familiar to the Greeks, it may be doubted, whether, in the estimation of that polished and discriminating people, an Apelles and a Zeuxis, a Phidias and a Protogenes, would not have been formidable rivals to the Cunninghams and the Scaligers, the Grævii and Gronovii of their day.

To point her fairest features, and infuse
A keener pleasure as his eye pursues;
O'er each wild scene to wave thy tissued wings,
And still present the picturesque of things.
Fair idol of the soul refined! whose sway 45
The Graces own—the powers of art obey;
In life's gay dawn, when every hope beat high,
And beams of glory danced before her eye,
The Muse to thee her earliest vows address'd,
And cast low cares for ever from her breast; 50
Thy aid in double invocation claim'd,
As now the pencil—now the lyre inflamed.
A guiding beam, ethereal Spirit! lend,
At once the Painter and the Bard befriend:
Of thee unfavour'd, what presumptuous hand 55
Shall wake the strain, or dare the scene expand?
Before thy glance life's aukward forms retreat,
Thy smile is triumph, and thy frown defeat!

As in Bellona's field, when courage fails,
Nor tactics thrive, nor discipline prevails; 60
In painting thus, where nature has denied
The spark divine, in vain are pains applied.
Beyond the reach of rule or precept placed,
No waxen wing can soar the heaven of Taste:

Poets and Painters, privileged heirs of fame, 65
 By right of birth alone, their laurels claim :
 The Nine repulsive, plodding toil refuse,
 And each dull son of System, vainly sues :

Line 66. *By right of birth alone, their laurels claim :]—*
 Etiam illud adjungo, sæpius ad laudem atque virtutem natura
 sine doctrina, quam sine natura valuisse doctrinam.

CICERO pro Arch.

S'il ne sent point du ciel l'influence secrete,
 Si son astre en naissant ne l'a formé poëte,
 Dans son génie étroit il est toujours captif,
 Pour lui Phœbus est sourd, et Pegasse est restif.

BOILEAU, l'Art Poétique.

Without entering into a metaphysical investigation of the nature of genius, or discussing formally the various opinions which have been advanced on a subject so interesting, it may be safely assumed that all minds are not equally qualified to excel in the fine arts. Why two students, with respect to opportunity and application circumstanced as nearly alike as the nature of human affairs will permit, shall make an unequal progress? Why the one shall soar to celebrity, while the other sinks to insignificance? it is perhaps fruitless to enquire; the fact is, however, sufficiently impressed upon us by every day's experience; and whatever that quality may be, which we denominate genius, in no department of human exertion is its

The star of genius must the light impart,
That leads us to the promised land of Art. 70
Yet tho' no maxims teach the Muses lore,
No charts conduct us on the graphic shore,

presence more conspicuous, or its absence more fatal, than in painting.

To deny a difference in the natural powers of the mind, and their adaptation to particular pursuits, a difference beyond the reach of art or education to remove, is a doctrine which, (although the pride of metaphysical subtlety may ingeniously maintain it) will always be controverted by a host of facts too strong to be entangled in the fine-spun webs of sophistry or syllogism. There are intellectual as well as physical sterilities; and even where the mental soil is not barren, it will not prove equally grateful to every sort of culture, or equally productive with every kind of crop.

Johnson observes, that "true genius is a mind of large general powers accidentally determined to some particular direction." This definition ascribes to genius the capability of general excellence; but if this great moralist, philosopher, and critic (whose claims to true genius few will be tempted to contest) had been *accidentally determined* to the direction of painting or music, he most probably would have furnished a refutation of his own remark, and proved that those powers which could march with giant stride to excellence in the road of literature, would scarcely

The voice of Precept claims prescriptive force,
 And rules, like beacons, warn us on our course.
 When neither lightly held, nor prized too high, 75
 Rules may assist the strength they can't supply ;

enable him to crawl to mediocrity in the path of the fine arts.

Cicero, the greatest orator of his time, was one of the meanest poets :

“ O ! fortunatam natam me consule Romam

“ Antoni gladios potuit contemnere, *si sic*

“ *Omnia dirisset.*”

JUVENAL.

What ambitious bard would accept of safety on such a condition ?

Pope *directed* his abilities to painting ; but though “ he lisped in numbers” he found no such facility in art, and his proficiency with the pencil afforded no favourable illustration of the general powers of genius.

The author is aware, that there are great names to be found in opposition to these sentiments, and amongst others, that of Reynolds, who has strenuously maintained the doctrine here attempted to be disproved.

In subjects of this nature however, a respectful consideration, a cautious and hesitating dissent, are all that can be due to authority ; and he can have but little claim to be heard in the discussion, who has not the courage to question any opinion which he conceives to be on the side

The fountain copious feeds the stream below,
But artful channels teach it how to flow ;
Collect the wandering waters as they glide,
And turn to use the regulated tide. 80

of error and prejudice, or inconsistent with truth and experience.*

To assert, that labour, however persevering or well directed, is adequate to the attainment of excellence in the more refined pursuits of life, may, possibly, be an encouragement to patient industry, but we should consider that it is also a delusion to plodding dulness ; and becomes the means of degrading many a prosperous trader and skilful mechanic, to a vulgar versifier or a wretched artist.

The works of Taste, though objects of the highest gratification, are not articles of the first necessity ; and there is little danger to be apprehended from the most candid avowal of the superior qualities which are required to produce them. True genius will never be discouraged by difficulties, and if all those should be deterred from the pursuit who bring to it only the laborious patience of the drudge, society will experience no injury, and the arts will benefit by their exclusion.

* It is curious to observe, how often those who dispute the influence of genius, and maintain the general equality of the human powers, are led inadvertently to bear evidence against their own cause. Thus, Reynolds,

Yet not on genius only, he relies,
 Who starts accomplish'd to achieve the prize;
 For as rich heirs who squander without sense,
 Derive no lustre from the vain expense,
 So, genius without judgment still we find 85
 But squanders wit—a prodigal of mind.
 The generous steed that prances o'er the plain,
 The higher mettled, needs the stronger rein;
 And scorn'd alike, they rouse the critic's ire,
 Who fume all vapour, or who flame all fire. 90

speaking of Carlo Maratti, says, "It is true, there is nothing very captivating in Carlo Maratti, but this proceeded from a *want which cannot be completely supplied*, that is, *want of strength of parts*. In this certainly men are not equal;" and again, "Carlo certainly, by *diligence*, made the *most of what he had*." These are no small admissions from him who declares that "In the arts nothing is denied to well directed labour," who says that "If you have but moderate abilities, industry will supply their deficiency;" and who asserts, that "assiduity unabated by difficulty, and a disposition eagerly directed to the object of its pursuit, will produce effects similar to those which some call the result of natural powers."

Helvetius also, the most determined advocate on the same side, admits that education cannot make every man a man of genius: "A quelque degré de perfection qu'on portât l'éducation, qu'on n'imagine cependant pas qu'on fit des gens de genie de tous les hommes à portée de la recevoir."

HELVETIUS, De l'Homme.

Judgment, supreme o'er all the powers of thought !
By penetration from experience caught,
Clear prism of mind, where sage reflection views
Truth's purest colours freed from Error's hues !
Safe pilot of the soul ! without whose aid 95
Equipp'd in vain, Ambition's anchor's weigh'd :
Science misguided quits her course sublime,
And Learning-founders with the freight of Time.
Judgment alone th' advent'rous train can save,
Who launch their golden hopes on painting's wave :
Bright o'er the scene tho' glory's visions rise, 101
Their course 'twixt Scylla and Charybdis lies,
Where Syrens lure with strong seductive power,
And Lestrygonian critics fierce devour.
To Judgment, then, let Ardour yield the rein, 105
To guide his speed impetuous, and restrain :

[Line 105. *To Judgment, then, let Ardour yield the rein.*]—In painting, perhaps, more than in any other art, our success depends upon the first principles which we adopt, and the first studies to which we are directed : yet there is no pursuit in which the student appears to be more negligently superintended. Years of the most valuable period of life are often lost in mistaken application to improper objects, or lavished under instructors of inferior capacity. With few

Who sets out wrong, with hurtful haste proceeds,
Each step still farther from the Muse misleads :
Too oft, confounded in the puzzling maze
Of schools and styles, the wilder'd student strays ; 110

opportunities of ascertaining his true course, or strengthening his judgment by contemplating at leisure the best productions of his art, the young painter either hesitates with all the indecision and inactivity of one who commences his journey without knowing his road, or commits himself to the discretion of a guide, who perhaps, after he has advanced a few steps, is but an obstruction in his way, and interrupts the finest prospects from his view. Painting is a craft and mystery not to be acquired by apprenticeship. Most of the eminent painters of the present day were self-taught, and the ablest masters of the past will not be found amongst those who studied in the celebrated schools of Italy, but amongst those who formed them.

It excites the indignation as well as the regret of Taste, to contemplate Reynolds drudging in the manufactory of Hudson. An eagle chained to the perch of a hen-roost !!

The mechanical aids which a master can communicate are of little importance. Sound principles are to be acquired by the study of fine works only, and the contemplation of nature. What you cannot learn from his pictures, the painter will in vain endeavour to impart. A facility of managing the pencil is soon acquired by practice ; instruction on this head is a go-cart to a child ; and he who cannot learn to walk

In error fixes—fluctuates in doubt,
Forgets his object, and mistakes his route :
Like hounds at fault, still turns to scent the game,
And flags, exhausted in the chase of fame.

without such assistance, may be assured that his genius is of a rickety constitution, and deficient in the vigour necessary for the journey he would undertake. Reynolds says, “It is of no use to prescribe to those who have no talents, and those who have will find methods for themselves.”

The more refined operations of the pencil, the manner in which it acts as the dextrous agent of the eye and the mind, will vary beyond the control of instruction, according to the experience, the enterprize, and the taste of him that holds it.

In art nothing can be justly termed knowledge, but that which we have made our own by observation and experiment.

The candid painter, who only is worthy of giving instruction, will confess, that he has but little to impart.* He

* If the master has himself a pure taste, and will conscientiously take the time and trouble which are necessary to purify and improve the taste of his pupil, he may indeed render him the most essential service. Let him be carefully taught to see, and he will soon learn to handle; but it is to be feared that this is not the usual process of tuition. The student is made *useful* in various ways not conducive to his improvement, and is too often treated as a drudge rather than a disciple.

Here, common sense must pay what precept owes ;
 Trade-wind of life ! that ever steady blows : 116
 Safe in that track we boldly bend the sail,
 While hurricanes in higher climes prevail.

From purer founts the youthful poet draws
 His inspiration in the Muses' cause ; 120

cannot inoculate his taste, or transfuse his feelings. Whatever he values in himself he knows to be beyond the power of words to communicate; what he possesses he knows to have been obtained by self-effort, and to be attainable by no other means. The painter, like the poet, must instruct himself, by studying the works of those who have excelled in his art; by the accurate observation of nature, and the assiduous exercise of his faculties in every way conducive to invigorate his fancy, correct his judgment, and refine his taste.

Line 119. *From purer founts the youthful poet draws*]— Besides the advantages possessed by the Poet, *as contrasted with the Painter*, which have been already noticed in the first part of this work, many others may be shewn to operate with equal effect in his favour.

The young poet is at his outset introduced to the noblest productions of his art; his juvenile associations are influenced by a continual intercourse with the classics. He

Castalia's sons surround him as he sings,
Prescribe his flights, and exercise his wings ;
Before his eye in bright example rise,
And hov'ring soar seductive to the skies.

performs his exercises in the company of Virgil, of Horace, and of Homer, and the first exertions of his understanding are directed to comprehend their beauties, and to compose according to the models which they supply. The knowledge which he derives from such sources is sound and appropriate to his views. He has nothing to unlearn, or unload in his progress. He is not left to wander in the darkness of ignorance, or to be deluded by the glimmerings of imbecility. The first light which he receives is of the purest ray, and the most permanent fire.

The young painter, on the other hand, is commonly attracted to the pencil by objects, which, however they may serve to awaken his genius, are seldom fit to direct his taste. If he be not much more favourably circumstanced than graphic students in general, he has rarely an opportunity of consulting the classics of the language which he would learn. He finds no *cheap editions* of the painters published for his accommodation: no *circulating library* of taste from which to furnish his fancy with the treasures of antiquity: even the imperfect translations of the old masters which the graver supplies, are too expensive for his portfolio, and serve but to tantalize his eye by an occasional glimpse in the window of a print shop. His chief materials of study are the casts

Mæonia's treasures—Maro's diamond mine, 125
 Enrich the humblest votaries of the Nine ;
 Immortal Milton's golden stores expand,
 And Shakespeare's bullion, shines in every hand :
 Whate'er of bard, in age remote, or clime,
 Still sounds melodious in the ear of Time, 130
 The Poet finds, to aid his toil, and raise,
 In kindred breasts, the fires of ancient days.
 Not thus the Painter's early progress traced,
 —Laid down by high authorities of Taste ;
 Too oft remote from Art's establish'd stores, 135
 His path with guideless ardour he explores.

of a drawing-school ; his only opportunities, an exhibition,
 and an auction-room ; and while in the one he learns to
 imitate the defects of the living, in the other he is taught
 to venerate the errors of the dead.

The best works of the ancient poets are known and ac-
 knowledged ; no base coin of imitation can circulate under
 their stamp : but the best works of the ancient painters
 bear no hall mark of authenticity to common observers, and
 the most clumsy forgeries are every day found to pass upon
 those who are less qualified to judge than anxious to admire.
 The young painter therefore, frequently exhausts half his
 course of study before he has clearly ascertained his object,
 or formed a just idea of that perfection in his art which

Preceptive lights afford a feeble ray,
And meteors flash delusive on his way.
Nor Raphael's wonders wake his soul to fame ;
Nor fires his breast at Buonarotti's flame : 140

ought to be the guide of his industry, and the goal of his ambition.

Line 137. *Preceptive lights afford a feeble ray,*]—There are few subjects upon which so much has been said to so little purpose as on painting ; for there is no art in which the power of precept is more limited, and, if we except politics, there is no topic so much discussed that is so little understood. Although several artists, from the days of Da Vinci downwards, have communicated their ideas to the public, and numerous critics have poured forth in voluminous investigation the dictates of their taste, yet perhaps, there is no department of human knowledge in which so little aid is to be drawn from theory, or derived from books. To the writings of the professor, however, must the student apply for whatever useful information the channel of literature is calculated to afford ; for though it may be going too far, to insist with Pope, that only “ *those teach others who themselves excel,*” yet there is a value attached to the lessons of the practitioner, which the speculations of the mere theorist can never acquire. “ One short essay,” says Reynolds, “ written by a painter, will contribute more to advance the theory of our art, than a thousand volumes such as we sometimes see, the purpose of which appears to

Nor Claude's clear heav'n, nor Titian's sun-bright blaze,
Nor mild Correggio's more attemper'd rays,
Diffuse their chearing influence o'er his hours,
At once to ripen and refine his powers.

be rather to display the refinement of the author's own conception of impossible practice, than to convey useful knowledge or instruction of any kind whatever."

The realms of Taste are, indeed, peculiarly exposed to the inroads of vanity and presumption. In those airy regions the most callow understanding conceives itself equipped for flight. The dominions of the Muses are held to be a sort of free territory, where all plead nature's claim to commonage, and let loose their pretensions without fear of restriction or reproof.

An acquaintance with pictures is commonly mistaken for a knowledge of art; hence, many persons of learning and ingenuity labouring under this delusion, imagine that they must be critics, because they are collectors, and suppose themselves qualified to discuss the principles of painting without understanding even its rudiments. But every day's experience proves, that it is very possible, to have visited all the great cabinets of Europe, to have lived familiarly with the ablest artists, and to have collected gems, vases, and antiques, in all their virtuoso varieties, without having made any considerable proficiency in true Taste. Even the proudest attainment of critical ambition, that acmè of accomplished connoisseurship—a knowledge of hands, may

The latent spark, whose flame to heav'n aspires, 145
Some vulgar stroke of low collision fires.
Perhaps, some time-worn hanging's faded pride
The pencil's vig'rous impulse first supplied ;

be acquired beyond the poring sagacity of a Picture-dealer, without producing a sound judgment in Art, or a sufficient knowledge of nature : as we may be able to distinguish accurately the hand-writing of different persons, and yet prove very incompetent judges of the sense which is intended to be conveyed.

Poetry and music, though by no means free from the amorous hostilities of those half-learned dilettanti, are from their nature less vulnerable, or have been generally better defended. Poetry, in particular, has always found her ablest critics amongst her most favoured sons. Horace explained the principles of his art to the enlightened court of Augustus : amongst the moderns, Vida in Italy, Boileau in France, Roscommon, Dryden, Pope, and others, in this country, have taught by their precepts, as well as their example, and disciplined the taste of their age by the tactics of truth and experience. They felt the necessity of refining the public judgment, and did not leave the task to the vitiating interference of officious pretenders ; they stepped forward boldly to enlighten the tribunal before which they were themselves to be tried, and rescued the interests of the Muse from the errors of igno-

Or, yet more humbly touch'd, the spring of Taste,
By holy tales on chimney-china traced : 150
—Stiff ancestors, expell'd from pompous halls,
The mildew'd ornaments of mould'ring walls.

rance on the one hand, and the perversion of pedantry on the other.

Painting, in this respect, has not been so fortunate, and has found but little literary illustration within the pale of the profession. They who have best exemplified by the pencil, have not always been qualified to explain by the pen ; a few illustrious exceptions, however, have sufficiently demonstrated the superiority of practical knowledge, and authorize us to believe, that if the painter were more frequently to assume the office of the critic, the public Taste in Art could not fail to experience considerable improvement. The student at least, would be warned from wandering in the ever puzzling maze of theoretical refinement, and spared the painful pursuit of those phantoms of distempered Taste, those “ unreal mockeries” of knowledge, which shrink on the slightest touch of inquiry, and crumble into dust.

It must be confessed, however, that much of the inefficiency of precept, as applied to painting, results from the nature of the subject, as well as the incompetency of those who so inconsiderately discuss it. The systems of philosophy may be unfolded, the principles of science may be explained, and the deductions of reasoning pursued through all their

Some village Vandyke, haply, fires his eye,
With Hawke, or Affleck flaring from on high ;
St. George, triumphant o'er the prostrate foe, 155
Or Marlborough, frowning on the field below.

complications, with clearness and precision. But how shall we successfully communicate visual impressions by words? In what language shall we express the varieties of form and colour? the gradations of light and shade? or who shall prescribe rules for the nameless graces of action, the nice discrimination of character, and the delicate diversities of passion and expression? all that constitutes excellence, refuses to be taught or discussed. All that makes the mighty chasm between the cultivated genius and the drudging mechanic, lies far beyond the reach of precept or rule, in the regions of Feeling and Taste.

Line 156. *Or Marlborough, frowning on the field below.*] — An enthusiastic love for the Arts has frequently originated in the accidental impression made by objects similar to those which are mentioned in the text. The disuse of “chimney-china,” or Dutch tiles, however, in our fireplaces, but more particularly, the state of neglect into which those popular *out-door pictures*, called *signs*, have lately fallen, must have lamentably diminished the influence of those cheap and convenient stimuli, and deprived of a seasonable resource the blighted hopes of the pencil. In the general decay of patriotism, as well as patronage, even

Beyond his reach, Art's bright examples placed,
In kinder climes diffuse the light of Taste ;
At home, in churlish cabinets conceal'd,
To virtuoso view alone reveal'd. 160
Tho' stars of Art in constellations shine,
The Painter rare enjoys the glow divine ;
In cold eclipse his fruitful powers decay,
While sterile pride still intercepts the ray.

the publican no longer thinks of adorning his door with an image of the defenders of his country. Formerly, every Boniface had his favourite hero, who, with inspiring aspect, presided, like the lares of the ancients, over the interests of his house. But the warriors of the present day are rarely complimented with this species of *signal* celebrity, and the Blakes, the Afflecks, and the Marlboroughs, have *fled from their posts*, without being replaced by the Nelsons, the Stewarts, and the St. Vincents.

Line 164. *While sterile pride still intercepts the ray.*] — The reader will bear in mind, that this passage, and some others of similar import which occur in the subsequent parts of the work, were written long before the establishment of the British Institution, or the liberality of the Marquis of Stafford had furnished to the student an opportunity of examining some of the most valuable productions of his art. It is to be hoped, that through the influence of examples so honourable, the complaints on this subject will

Thus, left to roam the graphic wild at will, 165
As chance directs, or choice—more fatal still;
'Tis, sure, no wonder, if unguarded youth,
'Midst Error's windings, miss the tracks of Truth.

every day become still more inapplicable;* and that the facilities of study afforded to the British artist in this way, will leave him but little room to regret his exclusion from the stores of the Continent, and allow of no excuse for inability, or bad taste. It should not be forgotten, however, that Mr. Thomas Hope took the lead in offering to the public this desirable indulgence. The facility with which admission was obtained to view his magnificent establishment, and the assemblage of interesting objects which it contains, may be said to have given the first impulse to that liberality which has so materially contributed to our gratification and instruction.

That part of the plan of the British Institution which offers to the student an opportunity, so much at his ease, to profit by the works of the old masters, is particularly entitled to commendation. It supplies a want which has long been felt; and were no other benefit to be derived from that establishment, this advantage alone is sufficient

* The splendid collection of Lord Grosvenor has lately been opened to public curiosity, and forms an important addition to those means of improvement which the artist owes to the growing liberality of the time.

E'en they who, practised in the rites of Art,
Should all the myst'ries of the Muse impart, 170
Too oft the Student's eager zeal betray,
And set up some gross idol in his way,

to make its permanence and promotion of the greatest importance. Under the judicious regulations which have been lately adopted, the danger of creating a manufactory of copyists is no more to be apprehended ; and if the subjects hereafter placed in the Gallery for the purpose of study, should be selected with a prudent attention to the advancement of elevated art, the best results may be confidently anticipated.

This consideration however, is of the greatest consequence, and cannot fail to attract the vigilant superintendence of those who have shewn so laudable a desire to promote the best ends of the Institution: for, if works of inferior ability, or (though of the highest merit) of a description not calculated to excite a taste for the nobler exertions of the pencil, be presented to the young painter, as objects to claim his imitation, and influence the direction of his studies, the benefits that might otherwise be derived from so liberal a plan must be totally frustrated, and a new link added to the chain which already fetters to the earth the graphic Genius of the country.

Actuated by this impression, the author cannot avoid expressing a hope, that the selection of such works as are to be pointed out for imitation, by the excitement of a prize,

Some gaudy phantom conjured up by pride,
O'er their peculiar system to preside.
Each coxcomb still, important and precise, 175
Consults his vanity in his advice ;

may in future be influenced by a principle more particularly tending to the cultivation of historical art, and more adapted to counteract the operation of those causes which have so long obstructed our progress in true Taste. Though he is far from desiring to depreciate the merits of the Dutch school, and has a just respect for their peculiar excellence, yet he confesses, that the Taste of Batavia is a plant which he would not *particularly* cultivate. Where it spontaneously rises to the luxuriance of a Teniers or a Wilkie,* the author will be amongst the first to pay the proper tribute of admiration, but he would not foster it in a hotbed, or force it by a prize. To the subordinate classes of art the talents of our artists are already too much devoted ; the peculiar taste of the country has necessarily driven them into that direction ; but the great end of an establishment like the

* It is hardly doing Mr. Wilkie justice, to class him altogether with the Dutch school ; for though he shoots with the same bow, his aim is evidently higher. In character he is their equal, in expression their superior. He produces as much truth, with more selection—has more refinement of thought, more propriety of circumstance, and more sentiment in situation.

A sly eulogium on himself conveys,
And tortures precept to reflected praise.
Timanthes thus, in whose confused design
All colours glare—all crudities combine ; 180
Whose forms inlaid in outline—flat and hard,
Appear a progeny cut out of card ;
A pasteboard breed, to nature quite unknown,
And scarce legitimate to wood, or stone.

British Institution, is not to co-operate with that Taste, but to correct it. The first object should be, to excite in the public mind a relish for the higher efforts of the pencil ; and to stimulate the abilities of the time, by honours and rewards, to the production of such works as assume a poetical and historical character, and exercise a moral influence over the minds and manners of man. There is no need of allurements to the practice of portraits, landscapes, and familiar scenes ; these are commodities that suit the market, and though, when skilfully executed, their merits are seldom adequately appreciated, they cannot be said to be wholly unregarded. But, whatever stimulus the liberality of the day affords, should be applied to give a new impulse to our ambition, and a higher direction to our Taste ; from this great end no diversion should be allowed in favour of minor interests, for which its attainment will sufficiently provide. Set the main-spring of Art in motion, and the lesser wheels will turn of course.

Timanthes hear, each golden rule impart, 185
That form'd his Manufactory of Art ;
Like Hotspur's starling tutor'd he appears,
And *Outline*, ever echoes in your ears.

Strengthen and establish the great stock of Taste, and the invigorating influence will extend to its most distant ramifications.

The historical and poetical provinces of Art are those only which require or deserve particular cultivation ; they have been long waste lands in this country, their value under-rated, and their products neglected, or repressed ; it is now time for enlightened policy to enclose them, and not lavish our husbandry on tracts of inferior fertility.

Line 186. *That formed his Manufactory of Art;*]—The evils resulting from unskilful teachers are conspicuous in all arts. Precepts and prescriptions do more harm than good, when injudiciously administered. The understanding suffers as much as the constitution, by improper treatment, and our genius, like our health, is often the victim of a quack, in cases where the faculties of the mind, and the powers of nature, require only to be left to their own operation.

What is commonly called instruction, while it seems to expedite our progress, is too often an impediment in our way, by confining us to the pace, and incumbering us with the prejudices, of our guide.—In the Arts, a master is not so much a Mentor for our direction, as a model for our

“ Let not” (he cries) “ the palette tempt your hand,
“ Tho’ glittering all its gaudy stores expand ; 190
“ The harlot hues from chaster beauties lure
 the dazzled sense, and drawing is the cure.

imitation ; the lesson is not so impressive as the illustration—the comment supersedes the text. An ordinary painter, therefore, although a man of sense, and well grounded in the theory of his art, seldom proves a successful teacher ; for what he would establish by his precept he destroys by his example. He will in vain point out to others the road to excellence, while he himself travels another way. Even a good painter may be a bad instructor, if his integrity is not equal to his talents ; if he has not as much candour as genius ; if he is not conscious of his defects, and capable of acknowledging them—if he does not, in short, forget himself in his precepts, and sacrifice his pride to his pupil, and his art.

The best painters do not possess all the merits of their profession ; they must necessarily have many deficiencies ; for, in a study so arduous and comprehensive, excellence in one part is perhaps, all that Genius can hope for, or industry accomplish. They often however, console themselves in their prejudices for the defect of their powers, they diligently depreciate what they cannot obtain, and endeavour to balance the account of their imperfections by over-rating their merits.

The advocate of nature contemns the votary of the

“ To drawing, therefore, dedicate your powers,
“ And give to chalk and charcoal all your hours !”

Now, to Panæus, should your zeal apply,— 195
The draughtsman's toil 's superfluous in his eye;

antique, and applauds truth of imitation, even in a common object, beyond the more general character of curious selection, and ideal grace. The colourist undervalues the draughtsman, and while he views with rapture the magical deformities of Rembrandt, turns with disdain from those examples of purity and correctness which characterise the tan-coloured creation of Poussin. Thus, through all the provinces of Art, each stands proudly on his peculiar territory, with all the prejudices of a patriot, denying the claims of his neighbours, and loudly proclaiming his own.

Embarrassed alike by the caprices of the artist and the connoisseur, the student finds them often at variance with themselves, and almost always with each other ; mistaking their prejudices for principles ; displaying their pictures as models of perfection, and delivering their opinions as aphorisms of Art. The mind must carry some ballast to sail steadily through these currents. It will be one judicious precaution, however, if we confide only in those who justify their maxims by the evidence of their merits: we may take every man as a guide in his proper path, but we should distrust him the moment he attempts to confine us

In *tone* he triumphs—rich in *surface* shines,
 And *models* Nature, rather than *designs*.
 Unskill'd in feats of Academic lore,
 His hand at random runs the canvas o'er ; 200
 While plodding at his pencil's end he tries
 To catch what casualty of touch supplies.
 Through his dark mind his meaning works its way,
 As Satan groped through chaos into day ;
 He loads, he labours, scratches, scumbles, scrapes,
 The crude conception takes a thousand shapes ; 206
 'Till piteous of his pains and perils past,
 Kind midwife Chance, delivers him at last ;
 While Plagiarism prepared at hand attends,
 To aid the birth, and all her plunder lends. 210
 Should he advise, " Let colouring claim your toil,
 " Like Rubens, pour the rapid sketch in oil ;

there, or would endeavour to persuade us that it is the high road.

Line 211. *Should he advise, " Let colouring claim your toil,]*
 —Between the opposite extremes here described, the author recommends a middle course ; as most likely to embrace the benefits of each practice, without incurring the disadvantages of either. The student who long employs himself exclusively in drawing, while he attains to correctness and precision, runs the risk of becoming hard and

“ Tho’ coxcombs still their *Outline* labours prize,
“ And bid a stony, cold creation rise,
“ In dry Cartoons, the palette’s praise resign, 215
“ And Nature’s charms, to form alone confine ;

dry ; accustomed to express objects by lines, the practice adheres to him after he has taken up the palette. He clings to his outline with affectionate solicitude, and as it is the part which he executes with most facility and skill, he is rarely induced to sacrifice it to those minor merits in his estimation—richness of colouring and rotundity of effect. On the other hand, the student who prosecutes his studies with the oil pencil only, is exposed to run into opposite and less pardonable errors. If he is mellow in his colouring, rich in his surface, and forcible in his effects, he becomes feeble in his composition, incorrect in his forms, and slovenly in his execution. If he be not hard and dry, he is probably vague, and undefined ; he loses all power of precision and detail, generalizes objects in shapeless masses, and is obliged to resort to a variety of awkward expedients, to conceal the imbecility of his design, in the artifice of his execution.

A plan of study, in which the Painter and the Draughtsman co-operate ; in which the pencil and the portcrayon may act as mutual correctives, offers perhaps, the best security for a style, which shall unite the beauties of colouring, to the merits of design ; and sustain the illusions of vigorous effect, by scientific precision and judicious detail.

Of the defects which result from an exclusive devotion

“ Let Taste, and Truth, superior skill impart,
“ And Light, and Beauty, gild your glowing art.”

Urged to extremes, thus fond opinion sways,
And, self-seduced, the biass'd mind obeys ; 220

to the powers of design, sufficient illustration is afforded by the general productions of the Roman School. The outline, even of Raphael himself, is too often conspicuous at the expense of propriety and good taste. The celebrated picture of the Transfiguration, though it has many claims to be considered the finest production of the pencil existing, exhibits this imperfection in a very striking degree: a line is plainly discoverable round most of the figures, and particularly conspicuous in the boy, and the female kneeling in the front of the groupe. Julio Romano, who worked upon these two figures, is reported to have been, out of respect to his master, most scrupulously tenacious in preserving his outline. There is certainly, no room to regret the punctilious reverence of the scholar on this occasion; for, though the obtrusion of the outline is evidently a defect, yet, perhaps, the picture would not have derived much improvement from Julio's mode of removing it.

An impartial examination of this noble picture, must, on the whole, considerably raise our estimation of Raphael as a colourist. Its merits of the palette, indeed, cannot for a moment be put in competition with the wonders of the Venetian painters: but there are parts of it, which evince

While each secure in confidence, commends
The system which his practice best defends.

Euphranor hear ! whose tardy mind remains,
Unmoved by Taste, in Imitation's chains :
Who can't, though straining to his skill's extent, 225
A form imagine, or a fold invent :
Whose powers, like puppets, neither play nor spring,
Till something set before him pulls the string :
Whose pencil has no memory—whose art
Has none of Nature's characters by heart ; 230
But mars her meaning still as he proceeds,
And stammers like a school-boy as he reads.

no ordinary ability in this province of the Art; and some of the older heads display a richness and vigour of effect, which would do no discredit to that pre-eminent School.

The superior merits of the Transfiguration, in design, character, and expression, are too well known and acknowledged, to require an illustration in this place ; but the dry and minute execution of the accessory and subordinate parts, is one of the most curious circumstances which strike a professional observer of this work. In these, the taste of Perugino is but too apparent : and it is impossible not to feel surprise, that the mind which could rise to the noblest, and most comprehensive achievements of the

The Painter's hand, Euphranor plainly proves,
Safe, only in his model's presence moves :
His Muse—his Layman ; copying—his part, 235
The passive looking-glass of life—his Art ;
Where, void of choice reflected, Nature views,
In dull detail, discordant forms and hues.
With him 'tis vain, delusive toil, to trace
Th' ideal beauty, or imagined grace ; 240
“ 'Tis leaving truth, (he cries) neglecting day,
“ To chase a phantom by fallacious ray :

Art, could, at the same time, descend to the pursuit of the most trivial and injudicious details. The landscape is painted with the laborious littleness of a print ; and the herbage in the foreground wrought with such solicitous accuracy of flower and leaf, as to challenge the painful fidelity of Paul Potter, and furnish a treat to the botanist.

Notwithstanding that this “ last best gift” of Raphaël's pencil is doomed to grace the triumph of our adversary, it cannot but be pleasing to the lovers of Art, to reflect, that it appears to be in excellent preservation : it does not seem to have suffered in the regenerative process of the picture-cleaner ; and some unimportant injuries of time and accident, have been repaired with a degree of care and skill, which is highly creditable to those to whom this duty was entrusted.

" In voice profane, tho' pedant fools deride,
 " Nature is still our goddess, and our guide :
 " Wise in her worship—wealthy in her store, 245
 " Our duty, not to cavil, but adore.
 " Hold then this maxim firmly to your heart,
 " To copy Nature is the end of Art."—
 Roused at the sound, lo ! travell'd Torso cries,
 While indignation flashes from his eyes ; 250
 " To copy Nature ! Precept vain and weak !
 " Can vulgar Nature vie with the Antique ?
 " Can models cull'd from Drury, or Rag-fair,
 " Rival the Medici, or Belvedere ?

Line 252. *Can vulgar Nature vie with the Antique?*]—As the young painter is from his outset peculiarly exposed to be tossed to and fro, in this conflict of opposing opinions, he cannot begin too early, to use his own judgment, and exercise the faculty of reflection. He must soon think for himself, or he will study to very little purpose. Reflection indeed, is an operation of the mind, which appears to be very unaccountably neglected, in the present system of intellectual cultivation. The art of thinking, which is the most important of all acquirements, seems wholly unattended to, in the overwhelming mass of elementary accomplishment. When we consider, how little the production of excellence in the present day appears to keep

" Let patient Dulness prosper by such rules, 255
 " In Dutch Academies, and German Schools!
 " Where plodding Art a low mechanic creeps,
 " And fetter'd Fancy drops her wing and weeps:

pace with the opportunities, the powers, and the prevalence of instruction, it almost warrants a doubt, whether we are not over-taught in most arts; whether the vegetation may not be choked by the manure. The tendency of modern education, is, perhaps, more to encumber than to cultivate the soil: to make a granary, rather than a garden.

We reverse the system of Rousseau; he would have the pupil to do every thing himself—we will not allow him to do any thing. He would consult, and call forth the natural growth of the understanding—we seem to consider it as barren, and till, and sow, and plant incessantly, to counteract its sterility, without waiting for a crop.

" We ply the memory, we load the brain,
 " Bind rebel wit, and double chain on chain,
 " Confine the thought to exercise the breath,
 " And keep them in the pale of words till death."

POPE.

We may be said to play our parts like actors, and strut upon the stage of science, uttering knowledge not our own. The ideas of others are so forced upon us from our cradle, that our minds become crammed beyond the power of digestion: our faculties lie oppressed and inactive, beneath

" Where mountebanks the Graphic stage ascend,
 " To act the apes of Nature, and offend: 260
 " To shew her antick tricks—her shapes uncouth,
 " And call the burlesque exhibition—Truth.

the load of erudition, and our genius dies of a plethora even in its prime.

Thus it is, that they who instruct themselves, often make the greatest proficiency in real knowledge; for they reflect more than those who are instructed by others. By knowing what others have thought, we may become learned, but to become wise we must think, ourselves. Though erudition is the aliment of the understanding, yet reflection is its exercise; and the one is not more essential to health than the other. Reflection is the grand process of mind carried on by superior capacities, which distills from the raw materials of knowledge the purest spirit of science and of truth. To be always learning, seems as absurd as to be always feeding: there is a gluttony of the moral, as well as of the physical appetite; and a *mere* scholar is an intellectual gourmand, who, in the drowsy sensuality of erudition, forgets that as the end of eating is to invigorate the body for action, so the use of learning is to promote the exertion of the mind.

— Cætëros pudeat, si qui ita se literis abdidèrunt,
 ut nihil possint ex his neque ad communem afferre fructum,
 neque in adspectum lucemque proferre. Cíc. pro Arch.

The ascendancy of learning over knowledge, in modern

" Such truths are libels, tried by Taste and Sense,
 " The more the truth, the greater the offence.
 " What ! shall the Muse, that famed Urbino fired,
 " And Buonaroti's bolder soul inspired,

266

times, appears but little favourable to the rational improvement of the human faculties : words have superseded ideas in our minds :

" Words are man's province, words we teach alone."

POPE.

The scholar takes precedence of the sage ; and in the arrogance of academic estimation, a Socrates, who, like the ancient philosopher, knew only the vulgar tongue, would rank as an ignoramus. The pedant erects an altar, at which we all offer incense to the idol erudition : The worship spreads through the inquisition of criticism : few have the courage to question a faith at once so fashionable and formidable ; and every school is a church that preaches the religion of learning.

Wincklemann, who, whatever may be thought of him as a connoisseur, had at least the reputation of a scholar, treating of the causes which conspired to enable the Greeks to excel in the Arts, observes, " On chercha tard à être érudite, c'est-à-dire, à savoir ce que d'autres ont su. Devant les beaux siècles de la Grèce il étoit facile d'être savant, dans le sens qu'on attache aujourd'hui à ce mot, et chacun pouvoit acquérir la sagesse. Il y avoit alors dans le monde

“ Descend where vulgar Imitation toils
“ O’er drolls indecorous, and boors in broils?
“ Plod at the mercy of her model still,
“ And prove in foul fac-simile her skill? 270
“ Let higher objects, nobler views invite
“ The Graphic pinion, and provoke its flight!
“ Lo! where enshrined on Tiber’s classic shore,
“ While crowds without idolatry adore ;

une vanité du moins, celle de connoître beaucoup de livres.”

Learning, as the channel through which flows the knowledge of the ancients, must ever have a just claim to our attention and respect. To observe their sentiments in their original dress ; to take their words, as it were, from their own mouths ; will always be a laudable gratification, as well as an useful exercise of Taste ; although, from the agency of translation, it may have ceased to be a necessity of Science. But, when an acquaintance with the languages of the ancients is considered the end of our ambition, instead of the means of our information ; when we pride ourselves more on a knowledge of their words, than their wisdom ; and elevate the barren stores of inert erudition above the fruitful acquirements of active science and philosophy ; we may justly be said to labour under the influence of literary superstition, and sacrifice to the prejudices of pedantry the interests of genius, and the dignity of knowledge.

“ The Gods of Greece, their heathen heav’n forego,
“ To shine the Deities of Taste below. 276
“ There, pay your homage ! there, devote your heart !
“ And vow fidelity to ancient Art !
“ On Attic wings alone, attempt the skies,
“ Nor look at Nature but through Grecian eyes.”—

Thus Torso teaches, and his works have shown 281
That no man studies Nature more—in stone,
With patient zeal delighted still to trace
Her sculptured character, and marble face.
While true—to Art, the wondering critic owns, 285
His forms are statues, and his flesh is bronze !
A firm believer, travell’d Torso took
His faith on trust, nor look’d at Nature’s book ;
The pure Antique—his creed in every part,
The Ancients—his evangelists of Art ; 290
Their works the gospel of his Taste receives,
And Rome’s infallibility believes.

Thus, sects in Art, as well as Faith, are found,
And bigots, even in Virtù abound :
Blockheads in parties hide their want of sense, 295
And strut in corporative consequence.

O'er such let Reason still ascendant sway,
Nor with a blind credulity obey.
Exclusive creeds are but by fools embraced,
Free-thinking is philosophy in Taste. 300

Line 300. *Free-thinking is philosophy in Taste.*] — The professed votaries of Virtù will, perhaps, consider this, a licentious sentiment; and may be disposed, in this place, and in some other passages of his work, where similar opinions are advanced, to look upon the Author as a kind of factious innovator, who would disturb the calm of criticism, and shake the foundations of authority. Locke observes, that “innovation is a terrible charge amongst those who judge of men’s heads, as they do of their perukes, by the fashion;” but notwithstanding the risk of this formidable imputation, the Author, since he has presumed to raise his voice amongst

“The clamorous crowd that claim the public ear,” prefers the candid declaration of his own sentiments (such as they are) to the politic profession of opinions more prevalent; and the adoption of which might secure to him the reputation of Taste, without the trouble of thinking, or the necessity of knowledge.

In advocating the freedom of Taste, he conceives, that he only asserts one of the intellectual rights of mankind, which can never be denied but by prejudice, or surrendered but by weakness. He acknowledges himself to be one of those, who lament the long and general influence of precedent

But chief, distrust their vain preceptive dreams,
Whose partial maxims recommend extremes;

in Literature and the Arts: he would see with pleasure every poet invested with the 'privileges of Homer, and every painter as unshackled as Apelles; for intellectual freedom is as essential to the production of great works, as political freedom to the performance of great actions. He knows of no good reason, why the ancients should be suffered to set the fashions of our understandings; why we should continue to dress our heads in the glass of our ancestors, and fancy we possess their powers, when we have put on their airs. He cannot, therefore, applaud with Pope, the poetical humility of the "Mantuan Muse;" he finds himself irresistibly tempted to regret, that "young Maro" did not persist to think himself

"——— above the Critic's law,

"And but from Nature's fountain scorn to draw."

Had he not unluckily discovered that "Nature and Homer were the same," instead of a servile imitation of the Mæonian Bard, he might have given the world an original work; and furnished a precedent of intellectual independence, which would have been more useful to his Parnassian posterity, than even the brilliant example of his genius.

How must the vanity of erudition have deranged the operation of common sense, in a late eminent scholar!*

* Wharton—Essay on the Genius of Pope.

For some loved part, who o'erleap every fence,
And madly rush beyond the bounds of sense.

when he could deliberately declare, that "to attempt to understand poetry without having diligently digested the Poetics of Aristotle, would be as *absurd* and *impossible*, as to pretend to a skill in geometry, without having studied Euclid."*

It would have produced a sort of climax of classical utility and didactic importance, if he had also, represented the Georgics of Virgil as essential to a knowledge of agriculture: if he had declared, that no man could become an orator without having studied Cicero and Quintilian; or a painter, without digesting the graphical wonders of Pliny and Pausanias.

The Author hopes, that a smile at pedantry will not be considered as a sneer at learning. He is not ambitious of being classed amongst those who would exclude the study of Greek and Latin from the ordinary course of liberal education; and who think it not only a point of propriety,

* This most extraordinary passage has been quoted in the "Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste, by Mr. Knight," a work, in which the present writer (though he cannot coincide in all the opinions of its learned Author) conceives that the cause of intellectual liberty has been courageously maintained, and the advocates of regular system, and dogmatic criticism in Literature and the Arts, opposed with manly sense, acute argument, and forcible illustration.

Examine first, where Truth and Taste decree, 305
What Nature is, what Painting ought to be.

but almost a principle of patriotism, for an Englishman to understand no language but his own.

Although the smattering of classic lore which he can boast, gives him no claim to the credit of a scholar ; it is sufficient to impress him with a just respect for that character, when uninflated by pedantic pride. He cannot be truly desirous of enriching his understanding with the wealth of the ancients, who does not wish to receive it in their own money ; undebased by time, and undiminished in value by exchange. It is however, necessary to distinguish between the metal of thought, and the stamp of expression ; nor should we become such literary antiquarians, as to estimate the curious coin of erudition above the useful currency of science.

Line 306. *What Nature is, what Painting ought to be.*—Vague terms are alike the reproach of language, and the puzzle of science. They flatter us with the substance, while they cheat us with the shadow of meaning. They are a false coin of expression in common use, which embarrasses the intercourse of mind, and obstructs the circulation of knowledge. Reason, nature, beauty, truth, are words which, in most minds, bear different meanings, and in many minds no meaning at all : we use them however, as expressive of the most determinate ideas, and expect that

Pursue the stream where'er this knowledge flows,
Nor let your zeal in prejudice repose.

others will understand us without even understanding ourselves.

In Science, in Philosophy, and in Taste, we are so impeded by this verbal inaccuracy, that we can scarcely proceed a step without coming to a definition, and definitions are the cross-roads of argument, where intellectual travellers commonly separate, or turn off in a new direction. Thus, the word Nature, particularly as applied to painting, is employed in a sense so loose and general, as to occasion great confusion in our ideas, and contradiction in our language. It is perhaps not easy, to fix a precise meaning to a term so comprehensive; or to limit its signification so exactly to our purpose, as to preclude the danger of misconception. But it behoves the Painter and the Poet, at least, to try if they cannot settle its purport in their language, with sufficient accuracy, and regulate its use with due discretion.

Some artists talk of Nature with enthusiasm, and yet appear to have no higher ideas of her beauty, than those which are supplied by ordinary forms, and accidental combinations. Others speak of Nature with contempt, and consider that term as synonymous with meanness, awkwardness, and deformity.

The dull and servile imitator, who has neither imagination to create, nor judgment to select, plods on in vulgar

Try rule by rule, by no fond system led,
And 'gainst the living dogma—raise the dead. 310

confidence, and dignifies his tasteless toils, by the appellation of Nature; while the affected votary of ideal perfection, exulting in whim and extravagance, looks down with contempt on the drudgery of imitation, and flatters his imbecility, by calling that poetry, which has no pretensions to be considered as painting. Common observers admire the representation of common objects, and think that natural which is obvious and familiar. Connoisseurs and Painters, too often transfer to Art the homage which is due to Nature; and having learned to discover her defects, lose sight of her perfections.

Nature, properly understood, is the only legitimate object of the Painter;

“At once the source, the end, and test of Art.” POPE.
But what is Nature? all that attracts or repels—delights, or disgusts—dignifies or degrades, lays claim indiscriminately to that character. Where, in the endless diversity of her objects, the boundless variety of her forms, shall we find the model which we should imitate, or fix the standard to which we should refer? to ascertain this, is the business of study and observation, directed by Genius and Taste. To this end also, the labours of our predecessors afford a very material assistance; and so long as we do not make them a substitute for Nature, they contribute to open our eyes to her perfections, and place them more easily within

Unfix'd in view, the fluctuating mind,
At random roving, veers with every wind;

the grasp of our attainment. To Nature still, we must look through the productions of our masters, and consider even the best works of antiquity, but as telescopes of Taste, to mend our vision, not to bound our view.

In this way, Art may be said to officiate as the minister of Nature, to lead us to her temple, and expound to us her law. We must take care, however, not to forget the divinity in our devotions, and turn from the shrine to worship the priest.

Though nothing can be proper in painting, that is not natural, yet every thing that is natural may not be proper. Nature, as exhibited in the Arts, must be either positive, or relative—arbitrary, or appropriate: the former may be attained by imitation alone; but the latter requires selection as well as imitation, and demands judgment in the choice, as well as skill in the execution. A Venus from the pencil of Rembrandt although a very natural and faithful portrait of the Dutch vrow who happened to be his model; would be a very absurd and inconsistent representation of the Queen of Loves and Graces. It is not natural to give to a philosopher the expression of a fool, or to paint a monarch with the air of a mechanic.

Nature, to the Painter and the Poet, is that which is appropriate to their subject, consistent with their characters, and suitable to their scene. Their business lies with her essen-

When skill'd in all its bearings, we explore
The distant port that tempts us from the shore,

tial principles, not with her accidental circumstances. To discover those principles is their duty ; to display them—their art. Without them, their happiest efforts are but lucky hits—chance-medley felicities : their events are casualties—their characters arbitrary, inconsistent, or absurd.

Let us not flatter ourselves, that we imitate Nature, when, having taken a model from the streets, we tamely copy his peculiarities in the person of a hero, or a sage. In proportion as the portrait is faithful, the character will be false, and the skill of our execution but the more conspicuously expose the defect of our judgment.

The general principles upon which Nature operates in all her works, are founded in truth, beauty, proportion, fitness, variety, and grace. These are her essential qualities : possessed in a fulness of perfection, to which Art can never attain. She is therefore, to be considered as our only infallible guide to excellence, and must always be entitled to the zealous admiration of unperverted feeling and pure Taste. All her parts are adapted to her purposes with the nicest proportion ; her actions directed to their ends by the simplest means. When she smiles unforced, her looks are Beauty ; when she speaks untutored, her words are Truth ; when she moves unmolested, her action is Grace. She is the ever-living spring, from which flow all the streams of excellence in human arts. To the homage of

Diverting currents cross our track in vain, 315
We know our course, and quick return again.

the Poet and the Painter, she has peculiar claims, for to them she more openly displays her miracles, and appears in all her splendours. If they desert her altars, or set up idols in her shrine, they justly suffer the penalty of their apostacy; they are cast out a prey to all the fiends of criticism, and for ever excluded from the world to come in fame.

In Poetry, as well as in Painting, there appears at present a disposition to persuade us, that nothing is natural or simple, but that which describes common life, and common manners. The lower orders of society are represented as the depositaries of every thing that is innocent and amiable; and even their manners and language recommended as the most rational objects of interest, and the purest models of imitation. With the apostles of this creed, every thing that is refined is sophisticated; every thing that is elegant is artificial. Whatever is elevated above the character of ordinary forms, or the familiarity of every-day intercourse, is out of the pale of their sensibility, and a departure from simplicity and truth. But this surely, is a doctrine as delusive in principle, as it appears sometimes ridiculous in practice. Nature is no more the possession of the poor, than the rich—no more the characteristic of the inhabitant of the country, than the inhabitant of the town. She suffers as much from vulgarity as affec-

Ply then, the bright portcrayon, till you find
Correctness with facility combined :

tation, and a clown may be an animal as artificial as a courtier. If, in the one, the qualities of Nature are sometimes perverted and misapplied, in the other they are always oppressed and degraded.

There is an education of habits and circumstances, as well as of Schools and Academies—an education the more impressive, in proportion as the instructors are more arbitrary, and their lessons more severe. Our passions are professors in the great seminary of the world, that teach alike in the town and the country, the college and the cot. A course of poverty and hard labour is not more favourable to the human faculties and feelings, than a course of philosophy and belles lettres ; and the ale-house and the fair may be as fatal to simplicity, as the drawing-room or the exchange. Lord Chesterfield observes, that “ two farmers will practise as much duplicity to over-reach each other at a market, as two politicians in a negotiation ;” a rustic may be as deficient in probity as politeness. The genuine sentiments of Nature (to use an expression more common than clear) may be lost in the commerce of the vulgar, as well as the intercourse of the refined ; and grossness is not quite so good a substitute for them as decorum. A country justice, if he be not a poet, will tell us, that clowns and courtiers are not so remote from each other in their morals, as their manners ; that the former pursue their interests with as

Till the firm Outline flows at your command,
 And forms become familiar to your hand. 320
 Nor idly fear, should youthful ardour fire,
 To seize the palette, and in oil aspire.

much zeal, and as little scruple as the latter, though certainly, with more rudeness and less skill.

The habits and occupations of the laborious classes of society, are indeed, as little favourable to their minds as their bodies. Their feelings and their forms are alike affected by their circumstances, and he must be a very romantic observer, who does not discover in both, a coarseness incompatible with sensibility or beauty.

It may suit the purposes of Utopian theorists, and poetical philosophers, to represent the country as an Arcadia, and every clown a Corydon; to make every hamlet the abode of happiness and peace, and describe its inhabitants as the purest models of beauty and virtue: but a little experience quickly dissipates these delusions. A peep into this paradise of enthusiasts, discovers the serpent, even there, lurking amidst the flowers. We soon find that vice can pervade the cottage as well as the palace, and that it is very possible to be ignorant and awkward, without being innocent or picturesque.

Line 321. *Nor idly fear, should youthful ardour fire,*—If it were not the business of precept to deliver only such opinions as are just and true, without reference to local or temporary circumstances, the relative importance of draw-

The pencil plunge in Nature's richest dyes,
And glowing bid the gay Creation rise.

Design, the grammar of the Muse, may claim 325
High rank amidst the rudiments of Fame ;

ing, might, with peculiar propriety, be more highly estimated, and more strongly insisted upon in the present state of the English School. It must be confessed, that correctness of design is not the most prominent characteristic of British Art. Devoted to the merits of colouring, chiaro-scuro, and style, in which our painters are at present unrivalled, we quietly give up the palm of Academical superiority to our competitors, and seem by no means aware of the importance of the concession. Some of our greatest painters have acknowledged, and indeed exemplified, their want of Academical skill: Reynolds laments in his Discourses, this defect in his education as an Artist; and though the vigour of his unrivalled pencil, in the other parts of his art, counterbalanced its weakness in this respect, yet, he himself was fully sensible of the inconvenience which resulted from it, and has warned us in his precepts as well as his example. The fault which even his splendours could not wholly conceal or excuse, must be as conspicuous as unpardonable in minor powers. It does not appear however, that we are advancing to a purer taste of design; or that we exert ourselves sufficiently, to supply what we want of his excellence, by those merits which are perhaps, more within our reach; and unless

But still the pencil plays the nobler part,
For painting is the language of your art.
Congenial studies blend without abuse,
And, pleased, to mutual benefit conduce ; 330

measures be adopted to give a new impulse to the studies of the pupils who attend in our great school of Art: there is reason to apprehend, that the rising race of artists may degenerate from the present, as well as the past, and exhibit the defects without the merits of their predecessors.

The prevalence of portrait painting appears to have considerable influence in producing this general inattention to the merits of design ; the great expense also, which attends the most economical establishment, co-operates powerfully to the same effect. There is no study which requires a longer period of application, unproductive in a pecuniary view, than that of painting ; and there are perhaps, no students worse prepared to encounter such a course than those who usually undertake it. The young votary of Taste has commonly more genius than money ; hence he is obliged to pursue the *trade*, before he has had time to acquire the *art* of painting, and to commence business without capital or credit :

“ Gestit enim nummum in loculos demittere.”

The power of taking a likeness once attained, the young Painter sets up for himself, and carries on the manufactory of faces without much inconvenience from his academical deficiencies: but, when the spring of his ambition, at length

Associate, best attain their several ends,
And artful hide each others faults, like friends.

To form your Taste, and educate your eye,
In Beauty's School, to polish'd Greece apply.

relieved from the pressure of necessity, impels him to nobler efforts, he finds too late, that he has neglected the only means which would have enabled him to exercise his fancy, or establish his fame.

The French Painter remains longer in the Academy; and consequently, becomes more skilled in those parts of his art which are to be acquired there. He has more respect for the merits of design, and therefore studies them with more attention. He finds but little opportunity, or temptation to turn his talents to portrait painting, and from his habits and situation, has less occasion to resort to it as a means of subsistence. All his prospects therefore, are essentially dependant on his elementary knowledge, and demand a continued course of academical application. His pencil is commonly employed in works of imagination; on subjects of Poetry and History; in which deformity cannot be sanctioned by fashion, nor incorrectness excused by caprice: in which the tailor cannot officiate in aid of the anatomist; nor imbecility take shelter from the critic, under cover of a coat and waistcoat. He must, in short, draw the figure well, or he can do nothing.

In the French School therefore, the portcrayon super-

Like Moses, erst on Sinai's summit placed, 335.
Her favour'd hand received the laws of Taste,
With holy zeal fulfill'd the trust assign'd,
And broke the barbarous idols of mankind.

cedes the pencil ; they become designers rather than painters. In the English School the pencil triumphs, and the process is reversed. They are more theoretical—we are more practical ; they shew more science in the foundation — we more skill in the superstructure ; the vigour of their design is impaired by the feebleness of their execution—the vigour of our execution suffers in the feebleness of our design : they have more Art—we have more Nature ; they look to the Roman School—we follow the Venetian ; and it must be confessed, that their aim is the higher, though it may be admitted that our's is the more successful.

The practice of portrait painting however, though it tends to divert our artists from the nobler pursuit of History, is not unproductive of advantage. If it is unfavourable to purity of design, it is the best school of colouring. The continual intercourse with Nature, which it occasions, produces a power and truth of imitation, a richness, vigour, and variety of execution, which are rarely attained by any other means. What the portrait painter can do, he generally does better than any other artist. The necessity of giving interest to a single figure, compels him to a punctilious accuracy, and refinement of effect, seldom displayed in larger compositions. He supplies by his

She, first the powers of just proportion found,
And scatter'd parts in beauteous union bound ; 340
Assembled kindred sweets from every clime,
And form'd a standard for admiring Time.
As mountain summits still the ray retain,
When light declining, quits the darken'd plain,
So, in her Arts, those altitudes of mind, 345
That tower above the level of mankind,
Benighted Greece still shews the beam sublime,
The Sun of Glory shed upon her prime.
Successive ages consecrate her skill,
Attest her Taste, and hold it sacred still : 350
Though lost her sceptre, yet her learning sways,
Her Arts still dictate, and the world obeys.
O! triumph truly great ! to rule the mind,
And hold Wit's mild dominion o'er mankind !

Be yours the task, with faithful hand to trace 355
Her forms of symmetry—her turns of grace ;
To mark on what depend those powers divine,
That rule unrivall'd in her pure design ;

execution the defect of his materials ; and often invests vulgarity and deformity with a charm, which makes us forget the imperfections of the subject in the art with which it is represented.

Pursue her protean skill from part to part,
And seize her subtlest principles of Art. 360

Yet not on Sculpture lavish all your care,
Your labour let the living model share ;

Line 360. *And seize her subtlest principles of Art.*] —
The most superficial observer must be struck with that simplicity without insipidity, that similiarity without sameness, which appear in the productions of the Greeks. A kind of family likeness may be said to pervade the whole of their works, which, while it preserves and displays the common character of their Art, at the same time admits and exemplifies every variety of form, feature, and expression, that is necessary to mark with the most delicate discrimination, the distinctive shades of real or imaginary beings. Whatever the subject, there is nothing capricious, arbitrary, or accidental in their mode of treating it. All is the result of measured propriety, of ascertained truth, and settled principle.

The maxims of their taste seem to have obtained the consistency of a code, and to have been established by general convention ; for however varied their productions, in beauty, character, and expression, they all appear to be executed in the same style : their artists seem all to have worked by the same light, and to have been guided by principles which regulated even the caprices of Fancy, and conducted Sensibility to Science. Always seeking the perfection of

A due proportion of discerning toil
 Devote to each, and reap a double spoil.
 The Statue's stiffness oft his style betrays, 365
 Whose studies Sculpture still exclusive sways ;
 Correctly cold, and diligently dry,
 Nor muscle seems to move, nor limb to ply ;
 While sapless shapes their marble models own,
 And born of Sculpture, rise—a race of stone. 370

every quality and characteristic of the subject which they proposed to represent, they preserved and aggrandized the general and essential forms—suppressed or diminished the particular, and unimportant: they subjected the impetuosity of genius to the discipline of industry, and purified taste by reflection and philosophy.

Line 369. *While sapless shapes their marble models own,*]—
 In the present state of painting in this country, there is no particular tendency to the defect here noticed: the current runs another way, and there appears more occasion to recommend to the student an encreased attention to ancient sculpture, than to warn him against the abuse which results from an exclusive application to it. If the productions of the British School are not characterised by the defects, neither are they conspicuous for the merits which may be derived from statues; and the warmest advocate for that which is usually called Nature, may admit, that a higher relish of the antique could not fail to give an agreeable zest

The ease and pliancy of life demand
A bolder stroke, and liberate your hand ;

to compositions which are otherwise rich in every ingredient of good Taste.

The kind of encouragement (if such a word can be used on the occasion) which has been given to our Arts, and the general insensibility of the public to the chaster beauties of form and character, have tended much to produce this culpable neglect of the models of antiquity. Local prejudices of Taste resulting from the influence of extraordinary powers, have also operated to the same effect ; and the Author fears, that the course of study pursued in the Royal Academy, is not directed with sufficient vigour to counteract the evil. The Students of that establishment are perhaps, not enough impressed with the importance of a study, the traces of which do not appear to be particularly striking in the productions of those to whom they must look as their guide and example. Our practice militates against our precept, and we cannot reasonably expect them to persist long in a track, which they must perceive to be pursued generally with little ardour or ambition.

To be allowed to draw from the living figure therefore, is the great ambition of the Student, and the Antique-room is considered only as a passage to the Model Academy. Once admitted there, he rarely returns to contemplate the beauties of the ancients, and after he has obtained a medal for a very ordinary effort of his industry, he most commonly

The coldest touch, the living model warms,
To catch correct, his fluctuating forms;

absents himself from both. The influence and instruction of the present able Keeper (Mr. Fuzeli) has certainly tended to promote a more diligent cultivation of the antique, and to excite amongst the pupils a juster impression of its utility. It is to be hoped, that the Academy will zealously second his endeavours, and by prudent regulation, increase the stimulus in that part of their system which is the most relaxed in its operation, and perhaps, the most important in its functions.

The institution of an annual prize for the best drawings from the antique, could not fail to give an interest to this branch of study; and by placing it on an equality with other objects of their pursuit, not more necessary to their improvement, would afford to the Students a most convincing proof that the Academy has a high sense of its importance, and a proper zeal for its promotion.

The Author would also take the liberty of suggesting the expediency of adding to the present establishment, a Professor of Sculpture: in the first place, as a judicious attention and respect to the interests of that Art;* and secondly, as a powerful means of diffusing generally,

* The Royal Academy of Arts, includes Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. Amongst its established Professors,

While, rapid as the anxious pencil flies, 375
New powers of Art in pleased alliance rise ;

amongst the rising race of artists, a more intimate knowledge of ancient statues ; of promoting a taste for their peculiar beauties ; and a desire to understand the principles by which they appear to have been so uniformly produced. Some measure to this effect, seems to be, at the present moment, rather more than expedient. The general (and it is to be feared) growing disregard of that purity of form and character, of which the Greeks have supplied us with the most impressive examples, is alarming to the interests of Taste ; and unless it be checked by the timely interference of the Academy, must strike at the foundation of that fame which the British School has so perseveringly sought, and so honourably established.

there is one for Painting, and one for Architecture, but no Professor of Sculpture. There seems to be no good reason why, the Students of this art should not be allowed the benefit of public lectures in their particular department ; for although a knowledge of design must be considered the basis of Sculpture as well as Painting ; and though, as far as this knowledge goes, the interests of the former may be supposed to be adequately provided for in the establishment of a lecturer in the latter art, yet Sculpture is a pursuit of sufficient importance in itself, and sufficiently distinct in its material, and mode of operation, to require and deserve the privilege of a Professor, appointed for its

Precision, Spirit, Softness, Strength combine,
And freely undulate the flowing line.

Line 378. *And freely undulate the flowing line.*] — The merits of design require the more attention and encouragement from those who are sensible of their superior importance, in proportion as they are but little understood or esteemed by the common class of critical observers. With respect to the higher attainments of Art indeed, the general feeling appears to be particularly defective. The beauties of form, character, and composition, are neither so interesting to the public, nor so much cultivated by the painter as other qualities of art, which must be considered of an inferior description.

Colouring and chiaro-oscuro, force and execution, are merits more popular with the one, and consequently more studied by the other. The Ideal is subordinate to the Mechanical; Rembrandt is more felt than Raphael; and although in painting, and in music, the taste of the Italian School is always spoken of with rapture by the dilettanti of both arts; it nevertheless, appears to have made but little real progress amongst us. Neither our eyes nor our ears are yet sufficiently cultivated to be thoroughly impressed

own purposes, and to be treated with a degree of attention equal to that which is bestowed upon the two other arts of which the Academy consists.

with its peculiar excellence, or scientifically sensible in what its superiority consists. There is even a kind of national prejudice, which militates against its advancement, and which looks upon its progress with an eye of suspicious discontent, as if it were an invasion of our Taste, which our patriotism should endeavour to repel :

But we brave Britons foreign laws despised,
And kept unconquer'd and uncivilized ;
Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold,
We still defy the Romans, as of old. POPE.

The true John Bull, who is often to be found amongst those whose rank forbids us to class them with the vulgar, thinks it a duty of public spirit to set his face against all outlandish refinements, and is proud to prefer a ballad to a bravura ; or the humours of Hogarth to the sublimities of Michael Angelo. Even the few who are forward to disclaim this barbarism, and who profess the most delicate sensibility to the higher merits of painting and music, appear sometimes so mal-apropos in the expression of their raptures, as to excite a suspicion that fashion is the prompter, rather than feeling. The awkward application of our praise frequently lessens its value by proving it not to be the tribute of judgment. The strong spirit of our admiration is not yet sufficiently refined ; it still discovers a sediment of prejudice, and a flavour of false Taste. We almost invariably applaud the difficult, instead of the agreeable, and mistake the vice of the means for the perfection of the end. We prefer the strong impulse of surprise to the delicate touch of delight, and are seldom satisfied unless we are astonished.

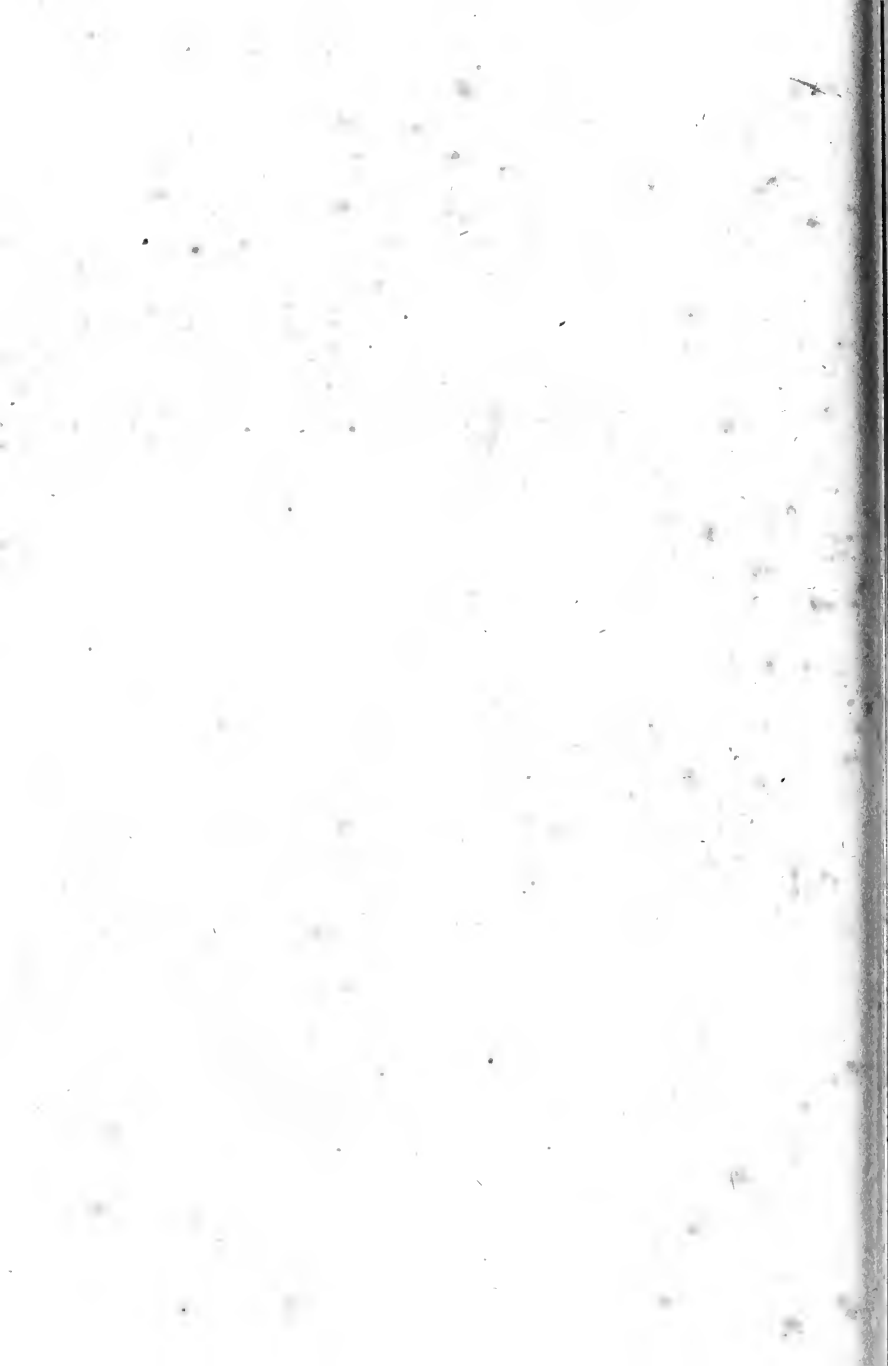
A rapid succession of demisemiquavers poured forth in a fantastic variety of flights and flourishes, to the utter confusion of melody and common sense, we admire as the perfection of music. A mechanical sleight of hand, a fluttering dexterity of pencil, or a laborious minuteness of vulgar imitative detail, we approve as the excellence of Art. We forget that the most obvious are not the most arduous difficulties ; that the most exquisite efforts of skill are often concealed in their own ingenuity, and least palpable when most successful.

“ *Ars est celare artem*, ” is an old authority, which seems falling into disrepute—a maxim of critical jurisprudence, overlooked among the novel enactments of the modern code. Our Taste, like a good housewife, delights in stir and bustle: violent exertion carries with it an air of busyness and ability, which bespeaks our good will. We are more excited by the jumping agility of the rope-dancer, than the easy grace of natural movement. This tendency to be caught by practical exploits, and Sadlers Wells wonders, perverts our judgment more or less, through all its operations ; for every art may be said to have its rope-dancers and its tumblers, who exhibit their tricks for the public gratification, and ever tottering on the edge of difficulty, endeavour to extort from our astonishment, that applause which they know they cannot expect from our Taste.

CANTO SECOND.

ARGUMENT.

Subservient studies necessary to the formation of a painter—Anatomy—its importance and abuse—Perspective—its office and effects—neglect of its principles inexcusable, however sanctioned by authority—folly of those who attempt to justify their faults by the plea of precedent exemplified—Architecture—its application to painting, and utility as a source of dignified and appropriate ornament—excellence of the old masters in this art—their general talents, and the success which attended their exertions in all congenial studies—comprehensive character of painting, as including and commanding all the departments of Taste—Nature through all the operations of Art, the proper object of the painter—wonders performed by the genius of ancient Greece, conducted by the light of Nature—her particular pre-eminence in the works of Taste, and the advantages which the modern arts have derived from it—origin of her excellence in sculpture, ascribed to the inspired efforts of her genius, aroused in the cause of her religion—the enthusiastic admiration excited by the beautiful statues of their divinities, favourable to the influence of paganism, amongst the Greeks—The Olympic Jupiter of Phidias, at Elis—his Minerva, at Athens—their destruction lamented—The Venus de Medici described—the Apollo Belvidere described—allusion to the unknown author, and address to his shade—the Hercules Farnese—the Torso—the Laocoon—allusion to the many other excellent productions of the Greeks, in sculpture, and the judgment which the fragments that remain authorise us to form of their art in its splendour—address to Time and Chance, to spare, for the gratification of future times, those inestimable relics—address to the Spirit of ancient Greece, expressive of the advantages which the modern world has derived from her genius—illustrative of the lessons which we have drawn from her wisdom; the refinement we owe to her Taste, and the examples which she has left us in her virtues.



CANTO II.

Insertisque toris sint nota ligamina juxta
 Compages anatomes, et membrificatio Græco
 Deformata modo, paucisque expressa lacertis,
 Qualis apud veteres;—

FRESNOY.

COLLATERAL studies here the Painter claim,
 And serve—the humbler agents of his fame.
 But chief, essential in the noblest part,
 Anatomy extends her aid to Art ;

Line 4. *Anatomy extends her aid to Art ;*—It would be more creditable to our industry as well as to our knowledge, if we made ourselves competent to the task of instruction in that part of Anatomy, which is connected with our Art. Whatever is necessary for a painter to learn, a painter should be able to teach ; no other person can do his duty for him with equal advantage, or can so judiciously select from the general irrelevancy of other studies,

Man's wond'rous frame with friendly toil prepares, 5
And first to view the bony structure bares ;
Unfolds how, firm, as Nature's pow'r appoints,
Attach its tendons, and unite its joints ;

those things which may be suited to his purpose, and shew at once their application, and their powers.

The most skilful anatomist must be embarrassed when he attempts to explain his Art to those who learn it for a purpose so different from his own. Unless he has the judgment of an Artist, he can form no clear conception of what we require of him ; and is always liable to mistake, and mistate, the mode and degree in which the knowledge of his particular pursuit may be useful to ours. Naturally desirous to display what he considers his most valuable acquirements, he addresses the Surgeon rather than the Painter ; and involuntarily tends to the interior, the curious and the minute, while we are interested only in the exterior, the general, and the palpable. In proportion as he is profound in the Theatre, he finds it difficult to be superficial in the Academy, and can rarely lower his erudition to the level of our wants.

The penetrating science of a Sheldon* or a Carlisle,

* Since this passage was written, the Academy has been deprived of this very eminent and respectable character. Mr. Carlisle has been elected to fill the vacant chair, and

Explains how parts, by quick volition prest,
Or rise in motion, or relax in rest : 10
Displays each muscle's action, shape, and place,
And rears the human building from its base.

which has traced and detected the mechanism of Nature, through the most miraculous minutiae of animal organization, must submit with reluctance, to clear away common integuments, and demonstrate muscles and bones. Such masters of dissection teaching the alphabet of Anatomy, is like Porson expatiating on a primer, or Newton explaining the multiplication table.

In the best times of our Art, an accurate knowledge of osteology and muscular anatomy, was considered of the greatest importance, and acquired with the greatest attention. Leonardo da Vinci, Michael Angelo, and many other great Artists, were eminently skilled in this branch of science, and perfectly competent to communicate what they so well understood. Our own days also, have furnished an instance of very conspicuous anatomical ability in an Artist. The late ingenious and indefatigable Mr. Stubbs, made himself master, not only of that degree of knowledge which was necessary for the purpose of his pencil, but pursued

as he, to a good natural taste in the Arts, adds considerable skill in design, the Institution may expect from his zeal and science, every advantage which can be derived from the abilities of a Professor who is not a painter.

Unskilful here, the naked form defies
Your vain attempt, and Truth offended flies ;
For as in Musick, so we find in Art, 15
Unless sound principles their light impart,

his dissections with an ardour which carried him into the province of the professional Anatomist. At the time of his death, though far advanced in years, he was engaged with all the vigour of youth, in the prosecution of a work on this subject, which, if completed, would have been an honourable memorial of his zeal, his industry, and his knowledge.

When anatomical instruction is communicated by the painter, it flows directly in the channel of his art ; there is nothing wasted or misapplied in it—deficient or redundant. He shews clearly, what is to be derived from the one art, because he knows exactly what is wanted by the other ; he assigns to anatomy its true place and importance in our studies ; he neither swells it into absurd consequence, nor sinks it into dangerous disesteem : and while he forcibly impresses its utility, is qualified to expose its abuse.

Anatomists, however scientifically they may be acquainted with the bones, muscles, and tendons which make up the human *frame*, are seldom found to be competent judges of the human *form* : they are so occupied in taking the machine to pieces, and examining its minuter parts, that when the whole is put together, they know less of its general movement and appearance, than many who have never heard a

The eye and ear, howe'er by Nature just,
Are guides, Correctness always fears to trust.

Yet some, by scientific pride misled,
Appear, in spectres to have raised the dead ; 20

lecture, or touched an instrument of dissection. They know the muscular operation which is necessary to the subsistence of an action, but not the muscular appearance which is essential to its beauty. They study the dead subject only, and provided the parts are in a sound dissectable state, are indifferent to their symmetry or proportion. They can hardly be said to be acquainted with a living muscle or an elastic motion ; they understand the structure in all its materials, its parts, and its dependencies : they are skilled in the plan and familiar with the interior arrangements ; but they want the eye of the Artist to measure the proportions, and to judge of the elevation.

In the application of anatomical science to the purposes of the pencil, the anatomist may appear more learned, minute, and philosophical—but the painter would be more clear, appropriate, and impressive : where the one finds himself most out of his course, the other would feel himself most at home ; and could connect with his illustration of the origin, insertion, and office of the muscles, a variety of useful information, as to the beauty and grace of their action, which will never occur but to those who spend their lives in observing them.

But whatever excuse may be made for the painter, in

While such half-skeletons our eyes abuse,
 That Nature starts, and Taste astonish'd views.
 Fools ! who with knowledge out of place offend,
 To shew the means, still sacrifice the end.
 Behold ! to prove their anatomic art, 25
 Each figure flay'd—dissected every part !
 Naked, or draped, alike their skill make known,
 Through this, the muscle swells, through that—the bone !

not teaching anatomy, there certainly can be none offered for his not learning it. Though he may be allowed to decline a duty which concerns the interests of others, he cannot be pardoned for neglecting a study so essential to his own. If he omit to furnish himself with that knowledge of the essential elements of his profession, which is within the reach of zeal and industry to acquire, he must not be surprised, if they who observe his deficiencies, undervalue his merits, and visit on his genius the sins of his indolence.

Line 27. *Naked, or draped, alike their skill make known,*]—This fault is more disagreeable than even its opposite defect ; as ignorance is less offensive than affectation. It is one of the most hopeless pedantries of Art, and has all the ostentation without the reality of science. The shield of Michael Angelo himself, is not sufficient to cover from critical indignation, his injudicious imitators—the swaggering retainers of his Taste, “ who tear a passion to rags,” and

Mere posture-masters of the palette these !
 No simple, natural positions please ; 30
 Like Ancient Pistol in the play, their art
 Must bluster, and look big in every part ;
 Their thoughts beyond all common measure swell,
 In grim hobgoblin grandeur still they dwell ;
 With epic state their lofty spirit stalks, 35
 Bestriding humbler merit as he walks ;
 Their vigour—violence ; their fancy—whim ;
 In full distortion, straining every limb,
 See monst'rous shapes disown'd by every clime,
 Burlesque in bloated action the sublime ! 40

follow him as Pantaloon pursues Harlequin, through all his hair-breadth escapes, to meet only disappointment and disaster, in awkward struggles of agility, and coarse convulsions of grimace.

Line 40. *Burlesque in bloated action the sublime !*]—The sublime is dangerous ground in Poetry and Art : it borders too closely upon the burlesque, for those to tread in safety who attempt to stride upon the stilts of imitation. It is a quality that never succeeds at second-hand : a coin, that when borrowed, always becomes base metal. He who copies Michael Angelo, will easily become extravagant, but he will never become sublime. The spirit of that great man is too strong for the “*imitatores servum pecus*,” it

While frenzy stares in each distracted face,
As forced expression maddens to grimace.

As neighb'ring monarchs, when invoked for aid,
Too oft usurp the province they invade,

intoxicates instead of inspiring them. Thus, fewer great Artists are to be found amongst his professed followers, than amongst those of even inferior men ; for the quality which pre-eminently characterised him, is one that can never be communicated by example, or acquired by imitation. In this view it is, that, with great deference to the high authority of Reynolds, the Author would have been disposed to hesitate, before he recommended the Taste of Michael Angelo to the particular cultivation of the English School ; for though that daring and extraordinary genius was the first who emancipated his Art from the dry, tame, and torpid manner of his predecessors, and led the way to all that is dignified and majestic in the practice of those who have succeeded him ; yet, his ardour, like that of most other reformers, urged him into the opposite extreme, and the Author conceives that we have now, in Raphael, a safer and superior guide. He must always be a dangerous model whose peculiar excellence consists in that, which, when we imitate, we are sure to lose. Buonaroti is a blazing star, too excentric in its orbit, to direct us safely in the navigation of Art. The sublime is to be sought for only in those tracks which Genius opens for himself ; it is an apparition

Collateral studies led beyond their sphere, 45
As enemies, and not allies appear.

Perspective, next demands the Student's care,
And, queen of distance ! reigns unrivall'd there.

that never rises to different persons in the same place : like the Genius of the new world, encountered by Columbus, it appears in all its majesty, to the first bold adventurer that penetrates its bounds; but is never after seen by those who follow in his course.

They who consider the genius of Reynolds as an ornament to his Art, and an honour to his country, have perhaps, reason to be pleased, that his admiration of Michael Angelo was not so enthusiastic at the commencement, as at the close of his career. Since he declared that "were he to begin the world again he would tread in the steps of that great man;" how far the powers of our English Apelles might have enabled him to succeed in that "terrible via," where so many others have failed, it is impossible to determine : but as far as we can judge from the fate of those who have followed in this track, there appears to be no room for regret, that the founder and father of the English School of Painting, "took another course more suitable to his abilities," and is not now to be classed amongst the imitators of Michael Angelo.

Line 47. *Perspective, next demands the Student's care,*]—
Reynolds has justly exposed the error of Fresnoy, on this

Confides the compass to his hand, and leads
The doubtful pencil as the draught proceeds. 50
Behold ! enlarging in her magic line,
The opening visto spreads—a vast design !

subject, as well as the absurd reasoning of his annotator De Piles. It appears indeed extraordinary, that an adherence to the rules of perspective should ever have been considered a defect, or an inconvenience. Since that Art supplies us with an infallible mode of ascertaining and representing the true appearance of things, if the points of sight and distance, are chosen judiciously, according to the nature of the subject and the scene, its principles can never be too scrupulously observed. To depart from them in any case, is to violate natural propriety, and to sacrifice to a fallacious pretext of Taste, the certainty of Truth and Science. But the position advanced by Fresnoy, has its foundation in a principle of criticism similar to that which in the words of Pope, is so often repeated, and so generally misunderstood :

“ Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
“ And rise to faults, true critics dare not mend,
“ From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
“ And snatch a grace beyond the reach of Art.”

ESSAY ON CRITICISM.

It is surely injudicious to represent the higher beauties of an art, as attainable out of the sphere of propriety : to allow such a latitude to the excursions of caprice, is to

The plain expands—the pillar, by her aid,
 Proportion'd lessens in the long arcade ;
 Behold ! how part, from part receding flies, 55
 As different groupes in just gradation rise ;

unsettle the established boundaries of merit, and furnish the plea of authority to transgressions without occasion or excuse.

“ To snatch a grace beyond the reach of Art,”
 is an expression, which, however poetical and pointed, seems to be neither very clear, nor acute. The word Art is too vague for its office in this place ; it cannot be understood to express the general power and function of any particular branch of human ingenuity, as Poetry for instance, for it would be a figure of speech bordering on a bull, to say that an Artist may exhibit a grace beyond the reach of the Art in which it is to be displayed. The word art must therefore, be supposed to mean that degree of inferior skill which is derived from system and rule, as distinguished from feeling and taste ; and in this sense, the line conveys to us a position which is certainly as just, as it is generally acknowledged, viz. that we should aim at a grace which mere system and rule can never reach : but this grace, it is humbly conceived, should not be described as attainable by “ *a brave disorder,*” or characterised as “ *a fault,*” which “ *true critics dare not mend.*” If it was the critic's intention to say, that in Poetry, or any other pursuit of Taste, exalted merits may be displayed which

While taught by rule, each figure finds its place,
And miles seem measured in an inch of space.
Think not th' uncertain sense—the erring eye
May slight her laws, presumptuous, or supply ; 60

are not exactly consistent with the principles and proprieties, which sound sense and experience have assigned to it. If he meant to inculcate that there are faults, which it is glorious to commit—blemishes, which it is a beauty to display—that there is a kind of non-descript charm, which is generated between error and excellence, and partakes unaccountably of the qualities of both ; the precept appears to be extraordinary, if not absurd, and indicates neither a pure sense of Taste, nor a clear conception of Merit.

In Art, there can be no excellence that is not founded in Fitness, Propriety, and Truth : these are the ingredients which are essential in the composition of merit : ingredients which admit of no intermixture of error, however ingeniously modified, without detriment and adulteration. But things which have no other relation than that of concomitance, are often connected in our minds as cause and consequence, and we fancy we can descry beauties resulting from defects, which exist in despite of them. By the joint operation of prejudice and bad taste, we confound the faults with the perfections of Genius, till at length in the blindness of indiscriminating reverence, we mistake the one for the other.

The doctrine of license, as laid down in this canon of

Th' indignant Critic in her cause attends,
And damns the proudest culprit who offends :

criticism, seems as absurd in Taste, as it is dangerous in morals ; it produces a careless laxity in both ; removes the wholesome restraints of regulated Science, and induces us to surrender the grand principles of common sense and common justice, to the capricious fluctuations of individual judgment.

A dispensing power is as improper in a Poet as a Prince—it affords a temptation, too great for civil or literary probity to withstand, and is seldom exercised, but to the prejudice of the poetical and the political state.

The arrogant dictates of criticism, or, as Johnson calls them, “ the arbitrary edicts of legislators, authorised only by themselves,” may be justly disregarded by those who have sense to value the natural freedom of the human mind, and courage to assert it : few dramatic writers of eminence would now consent to fetter their faculties in the unities of Aristotle, or think it an indispensable duty to divide their play into five acts, because Horace has said,

Neve minor, neu sit quinto production actu

Fabula, quæ posci volt, et spectata reponi.

The fearless wing of Genius may laudably brush away that cobweb code of critic legislation, in which pedantry and prejudice have delighted to entangle the interests of Taste, and endeavoured to tie down the talents of every age to the practice of antiquity. But we should be careful how we are induced to authorise under any circum-

Admits no plea of precedent—no claim
Of pardon, tho' preferr'd in Raphael's name.

stances, a departure from the principles of science, or the precepts of truth ; how we are led to tolerate, much less to applaud an indulgence which militates against the fundamental laws of natural propriety ; in order to invest with all the honours of admiration those capricious aberrations, those glittering excentricities of Art, which not being reconcilable to Nature or common sense, assume the character of irregular excellence, and always claim our homage, in proportion as they are beyond our explanation or comprehension.

Those beauties may well be dispensed with, which will not grow within the pale of propriety, and if all the flowers of this description were excluded from the parterres of Taste, the garden would not be the less blooming or attractive.

This doctrine will probably be considered extraordinary, by all that class of enthusiastic admirers, who pique themselves on the possession of a sensibility of Taste, far beyond the phlegmatic coarseness of ordinary faculties. Those martyrs of moral sympathy, who eternally vibrate in tremulous oscillation between the agonies and the extacies of life, have no respect for merits which can be made intelligible to common capacities : with them, reason and common sense are cold and vulgar critics, who judge when they ought to feel, and question when they should adore : In a fine frenzy of delight, they rush to the sanctuary of sentiment, from the rigid tribunal of the understanding,

Transcendant merit may defects excuse, 65
That find no mercy in an humbler Muse ;

and what they cannot defend with justice, protect by superstition. They delight to lose themselves in a sublime obscurity of meaning ; to wander in an agreeable confusion of the faculties amongst the inexpressibles and indefinables of Taste ; and are never so thoroughly satisfied of their superiority to us common mortals, as when under the rapturous influence of an admiration excited by perfections, which can neither be understood nor described.

Line 64. *Of pardon, tho' preferr'd in Raphael's name.*—
Precedents are seldom necessary, but when principles are to be the sacrifice, for that which will stand by reason, need not be propped by authority. But when weakness is to be excused, or error established, we would willingly make our predecessors co-operate, by quoting the conformity of practice, and producing the sanction of example. We crect into precedents the defects of great men, and are content to be wrong if we can but plead their authority. Thus, the name even of Raphael is not unfrequently brought forward to bear evidence in favour of imbecility and bad Taste : in the Cartoon of the miraculous draught of fishes, his mode of treating the boat has been considered as a decisive instance to prove, that it is sometimes necessary to depart from the strict rules of perspective and vulgar propriety. Critics have discovered, that if the figures were proportioned to the boat, they would be too small for the proper impression of the subject, and if the boat were

We grant some license to those sons of praise,
Whose glories seem to brighten as we gaze,
But each fired eye on his presumption low'rs,
Who claims their privilege without their powers. 70

proportioned to the figures, it would be too large for the dimension of the picture. In this formidable dilemma, from which not even the genius of Raphael could extricate him; they have therefore, sagaciously concluded, that he has taken the wisest course, and prudently sacrificed the lesser to the greater propriety. That an inferior may justly be sacrificed for the attainment of a superior merit, is a principle of criticism, which few will be inclined to dispute: but in the application of this principle, it is assuredly incumbent upon us to shew, that the greater merit could not possibly be effected but at the expense of the smaller: and it may farther be necessary to prove, that the preservation of the former is of sufficient importance to atone for the choice of a subject, which required the violation of the latter. In the instance under consideration, the Author conceives, that the disproportion of the boat is indefensible under any fair interpretation of this critical canon. That it is a capital breach of propriety, neither necessary to the subject, nor efficient to the attainment of any excellence, which could not be otherwise preserved, and that it can be justified only through the pernicious operation of that prejudice, which we find every day corrupting to superstition the rational worship of Taste.

Without derogating from the exalted supremacy of

As on the weak, rich armour can but tend
To cover each frail body, not defend ;
So, cased in high authorities of Art,
A fault's still found a vulnerable part :
Yet, as o'er shallow minds the shining mail, 75
Tho' valour's semblance merely, will prevail ;
Thus Critics oft, and Painters too, we see,
Who bend to precedent the bigot knee,

Raphael, it may be safely asserted, that few able artists of the present day, would be much embarrassed, in treating the miraculous draught of fishes, by any great difficulty in the management of the boat. However, they might sink in a comparison with their great predecessor, they would not strike upon this rock ; they would not think it necessary to follow his errors as a means to emulate his merits, nor consider themselves justified by his example, if they had sent their fishermen to sea in a bathing tub.

It is no excuse for error, to say it was necessary to the subject ; for the subject that will not admit of being treated without impropriety, should not be treated at all. The metal that is not malleable to our purpose, should not be placed upon the anvil ; we are responsible for the selection as well as the composition of our theme : and he who flatters himself that the intractable nature of his subject may excuse the imperfection which it occasions, will but more clearly shew the weakness of his judgment, and find his choice as much condemned as his skill.

With awe the ancestors of Art behold,
And even errors venerate—if old.

80

Some fools, like mimics, ape their graphic sires,
And Fancy their servility inspires,
To each bad part still sympathetic turn,
And with a sinister ambition burn ;
Their vices' heirs ! to prove their title good, 85
They'll aggravate the virus in their blood :
Their dull descent through every error trace,
And, bastard like, claim kindred by disgrace.

Nor deems the Muse mispent the studious hour,
Devoted to her stately sister's power, 90

Line 90. *Devoted to her stately sister's power,*]—It appears somewhat extraordinary, that in the long contest for pre-eminence, physical and intellectual, which has subsisted between this country and France, we should still neglect to take example, by the prudence of our enemy, in cases which involve some of the most important objects of our competition.

“*Fas est ab hoste doceri,*” is an old adage, which, though possessing the weight of classical authority, seems to have made but little impression upon us. Dependant even for our existence as a nation, on the security of our

Supplies of ornament and use she brings,
Proud fanes for Gods, and palaces for Kings :
To noblest acts a suited scene provides,
And o'er the back ground's gorgeous stores presides.

naval dominion, it is scarcely credible, that we should allow ourselves to be surpassed in any branch of knowledge, which is directly or even remotely connected with its preservation. Yet, it has been openly confessed in our Senate,* that the French excel us in the art of ship-building: our military men acknowledge, that in the Art of war, they are more learned and systematic; and our Artists must own, that they cultivate with more ardour and application, those elementary studies of their Art, which are so important to its perfection, and amongst us so often neglected.

For the signal successes therefore, which we have obtained, we seem to be less indebted to our prudence than to our good-fortune. If we triumph by sea and by land; with the sword and the pencil, it is more to the credit of our genius and our valour, than our industry or our discretion. We should not, however, so far confide in our strength as to despise the succours of science; for he is too sure of the victory who neglects any means to obtain it.

The stake which we play for is too important, both in

* In one of the debates upon the subject of the threatened invasion.

When Taste unfolds the landscape, by her aid, 95
The temple dignifies the rural shade;
Majestic ruins rise on canvas plains,
To prove her splendours in their proud remains,

arms, and in arts, for wisdom to allow the odds of knowledge to remain against us. It is a sort of treason against our courage and our taste, not to avail ourselves of every advantage, which may enable us to start fair with our rivals in the race of national renown.

With respect to naval architecture, there is certainly, an excuse for our remissness, which is as honourable as it is peculiar to us. Our sailors make amends for our shipwrights; and as they never fail to take the vessels of the enemy whenever they meet them, the French may be said to build them for our use. Our commanders indeed, like our connoisseurs, take care to supply us with a variety of models for imitation. They are distinguished collectors in this way: they are a kind of nautical cognoscenti, so indiscriminately voracious in their taste, as to be always delighted with the possession of the first, second, or even third rate productions of the French School. The most sagacious European critics seem to think that our collections in this department of the Arts, though consisting entirely of sea pieces, are of much more consequence than even the vaunted assemblage of the Louvre, and there is good reason to believe, that if we were disposed to make

Athens, new glories from her hand derives,
And Rome, in marble majesty revives. 100
Their heads in clouds memorial columns hide,
And heroes 'neath triumphant arches ride.

an exchange ; the imperial picture dealer would be very happy to *relinquish in our favour* (to use the most approved technical phrase,) all the treasures which it contains.

But whether we are, or are not sufficiently active in promoting those studies which relate to the naval and military interests of the country, the Author leaves to those who are better qualified to determine. It cannot however be considered "*ultra crepitam*," if he endeavours to shew, that we ought not so imprudently to set to hazard our pre-eminence in Art, as to neglect taking the judicious precautions which are adopted by our competitors, or expect from vigour without vigilance that success, which must ultimately depend on the union of both. An inattention to the subordinate, diminishes the impression of our powers in the superior parts of the Art ; our genius suffers by our negligence, and appears to disadvantage, for want of those lesser accomplishments, which every body looks for in our works, and any body may acquire.

Amongst our errors of this kind, the general neglect of Architecture as a study accessory to painting, is not one of the least conspicuous. Some of the best pictures of the English School, discover a deficiency of knowledge in that

In other times, o'er all her pomps impress'd,
The *Mural* Muse the Painter's skill confess'd;
For not in Graphic lustre bright alone, 105
The ancient Sovereigns of the Pencil shone,

Art, which is the more inexcusable, because it is so easily supplied ; but the prevalence of this defect, is perhaps most glaringly displayed in our portraits ; it would puzzle Palladio himself, to account for the composition of their architectural decorations, or to reconcile them with any principle of propriety or proportion. The pillar and the curtain, shift from side to side of the picture, in clumsy combination, through all the varieties of sameness, exposing at once our deficiency of other materials, and our abuse of these. As common-places of back-ground embellishment, they are, perhaps, the most manageable objects which we possess : but their eternal repetition, under the most inappropriate circumstances, has diminished their value, and to be now tolerated in any studied production, they must be very skilfully employed.

When we consider the variety of useful and ornamental materials, which, for the composition and enrichment of his work, the painter may derive from architecture, it appears more than remiss in him, to neglect to provide himself from so valuable and accessible a fund. The works of the old masters shew how assiduously they courted the assistance of this ally, and what they thought useful, we are not in a situation to disregard. Poussin, and Paul

Congenial toils employ'd their vigorous powers,
And every Muse solicited their hours.
Like mighty monarchs stretching wide their sway,
They proudly bade each neighbouring Art obey; 110
Where'er they turn'd their strength, subdued at will,
O'er all the realms of Taste triumphant still !

Veronese, were prodigal of their architectural knowledge, and often communicated an air of magnificence to their compositions, which raised the character of the subject by the dignity of the scene.

Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Romano, studied architecture not only, as subservient to the purposes of painting, but, acquired such skill in that Art, as to be esteemed the most eminent architects of their time.

We shall in vain aspire to rival these great Artists, if we neglect to adopt the means by which their excellence was produced. We cannot be sure of possessing their genius, for that depends upon nature; but we can always imitate their diligence, for that depends upon ourselves; and in proportion as we are deficient of their powers, we stand in need of their application.

Perhaps, the old masters might be more serviceable to us, if we made a somewhat different use of them. If we were to follow the track of their studies, rather than the track of their pencil: to imitate the painter rather than the picture, and take example by their industry as well as their Art.

Painting, in full imperial state expands,
And every province of Virtù commands;
Includes within her pale their lesser parts, 115
And shines—the genus maximum of Arts.

Still from the first, with steady pace, pursue
The winding maze of Art by Nature's clue;
For all her toils, antique or modern, tend,
But as a means to Nature—Art's true end, 120

Line 120. *But as a means to Nature—Art's true end,*]—
This precept cannot be too often, nor too earnestly enforced: for to the neglect of it may be traced all those errors and prejudices, which occasion the general discomfiture of Genius, and the constant corruption of Taste. Art advances to perfection, while she fixes her regards steadily upon Nature; she declines, from the moment in which she turns her eye upon herself. Self-admiration is her bane; yet to this fate, by a Narcissus-like fascination, all Arts tend; and the progress of the human powers, is obstructed not so much by the defect of their weakness, as the misapplication of their strength.

In this view, it may perhaps, admit of a question, whether the advantages to be derived from established examples of excellence in an Art, are not in a great measure counterbalanced by the servility of mind, which seldom

Nature ! the object of your search alone,
In picture prize, and estimate in stone :
The brightest genius must her beam display,
To glow beyond the meteor of a day :

fails to result from their influence. Whether, in short, we do not lose in spirit of adventure, more than we gain in security of track ; and sacrifice the chance of original excellence to the interests of general mediocrity. The tide of admiration swelled by time and enthusiasm, soon rises above the just level of Taste, and carries away even the mounds of common sense. A rational respect for merit, degenerates to a superstitious reverence of his defects ; till at length, our judgment wholly subdued by prejudice, we make the practice of our predecessors the only measure of perfection, and conclude that whatever is different is wrong.

Thus it is, that celebrated works, although they facilitate the outset of our journey, obstruct us at the end of it ; and while they seem to shorten the road, prevent our arrival.

The study of Nature, leads to originality and excellence ; the study of Art—to mediocrity and imitation. The one forms the Poet and the Painter ; Authors and Artists are the product of the other.

When, by critical acclamation, a standard of excellence has been once decreed ; the powers of Genius are no longer free, there is an authority placed over him, which he can neither oppose nor elude. Established models are

High, 'mid the stars of painting to aspire, 125
And fix'd in Fame, reflect a lasting fire.
Led by her light alone, in elder time,
Immortal Genius ran his course sublime ;

idols erected by the superstition of Taste, to draw us from the worship of Nature.

The noblest achievements of the human intellect, have been performed in periods, which were not previously distinguished by productions of particular excellence.—Before the critic arose to lay down the law of authority, and establish the tyranny of Taste. They were bold sallies of Genius into the boundless regions of Nature, before the maps and charts of criticism had parcelled out that delightful territory, to prescribe his path, and limit his excursion.

Homer composed in the earliest age of Epic Poetry, and while he indulged the wildest flights of his imagination, little suspected, that the caprices of his fancy were to become the fetters of his posterity. “The authors of the Iliad and Odyssey,” says Mr. Knight, in the “Analytical Inquiry, &c.” “would probably have laughed at the restrictions, which their modes of treating their respective fables had imposed upon all succeeding Epic Poets ; and have been as much amazed, as the most ignorant of their audience, at hearing of the systematic principles of profound philosophy, in which critics, after the lapse of so many ages, discovered their practice to be founded.”

Sophocles and Euripides flourished during a period,

From Glory's summit snatch'd the brightest crown,
And rifled all the regions of renown. 130
Led by her light, behold the sons of Greece
In every Art, still gain the golden fleece !

which may be characterised, as little more than the infancy* of the dramatic art, and enabled the critic to arrest its farther improvement, by deriving its laws from their example.

The "Terence of England," (as the admirable Goldsmith has called the venerable father of our present dramatic school) remarks in the Observer, "that it is humiliating

* The Author may possibly be considered not only injudicious, but presumptuous in thus describing a period in which so many of the learned have agreed to discover the mature excellence of dramatic composition. He fears however, that were he to explain, he should only make matters worse, for some of the most received beauties of the Greek drama, he might be tempted to cite in his defence as defects, and perhaps ascribe to a want of skill and experience, some things, which are generally acknowledged to denote, *in the ancients at least*, the perfection of both. The unities he would most certainly bring into court as evidence in his favour, and were a commission of lunacy to be issued against him from all the courts of criticism, he should persist to indite the chorus, as a dramatic nuisance, which the good taste, and good sense of modern poetry, have happily united to abate.

With daring prow the pathless deep explore,
Discovering worlds of wit unknown before.
But chief in Taste distinguish'd, from her hand, 135
A fruitful Nile o'erflowing every land !

enough to the pride of criticism to observe, that Tragedy after all the pains of Aristotle, to hold it up to the standard of Sophocles and Euripides, sunk with those Authors, and was no more heard of ; whilst Comedy, without his help, and in defiance of his neglect, rose in credit with the world, till it attained perfection under the auspices of Menander."

On the revival of painting in Italy, Michael Angelo, and Raphael, in composition and design, Titian, and Correggio in colouring, and light and shade ; unrestricted to the practice, and unoppressed by the reputation of their predecessors, arose to a degree of excellence, in which they have never since been equalled, because they have been always imitated.

These great Artists maintained the independance of Genius, and although they copiously drank from the streams of knowledge, felt it to be their privilege, and their duty, to trace them through all their meanderings, and ascend to the source from which they flowed. While they profited by the merits of other times, they refused to be bound by their authority, and surpassed because they looked beyond them.

We are more submissive, and consequently less success-

Greece pours profuse her treasures, and imparts
A vegetative vigour to our Arts.

Full long had Greece beheld her temples bare !
Or view'd her Gods grotesque in image there ; 140

ful ; we satisfy our degenerate ambition by studying Nature in the works of our predecessors, and contentedly turn our back upon the real object, to imitate its reflection in their glass. We look to them for that light which they derived from Nature. We place them between us and the sun, and then wonder at our own eclipse.

But, says the critic, in a formidable voice, "pursue the example of the ancients ; presume not to deviate from the practice of those who have secured in their favour the concurring testimony of Taste and Time. Do not flatter yourself that you can add any thing to their discoveries, or that you are authorised to resort to the same fountain from which their merits were derived. They have pre-occupied the ground of excellence ; and all that modern ability can hope to effect, is, to shew a pious reverence of their Taste, and a happy imitation of their beauties."

These are the maxims which criticism hangs *in terrorem* over the head of Genius, to keep him in subjection, and scare him from the exercise of those rights, which belong to him in every age, and which no authority of precedent, no enactment of Taste, can be justly considered to supersede.

That the treasures of Nature have been exhausted ; that

A monstrous race ! ill fashion'd and ungraced !
 To heaven unknown, and quite abhorr'd of Taste !
 Idols so coarse, could hardly reverence claim,
 And turn'd her whole theocracy to shame :

the harvest has been reaped by our ancestors, while scarcely a gleanings remains for us in the field ; is a doctrine loudly proclaimed by those who delight to magnify the merits of the ancients, because they derive all their importance from an acquaintance with them : it is a doctrine also, which unhappily, has been but too successful in producing all the effects of that pre-occupation which it asserts. The degeneracy of Genius in modern times, has been indeed so clearly established, by every form of proof, positive, presumptive, and circumstantial, which the ingenuity of criticism can supply, that were a Poet, or Painter, in the present state of intellectual declension, to fancy that he possessed those powers which Nature so prodigally bestowed upon "our sires of old," or to flatter himself that

"In his bosom glow'd their ancient fires,"

the full cry of ridicule would soon rouse him from the reverie of vanity, to sink into the despondency of hopeless imitation, and wonder at his own presumption : "Possunt quia posse videntur," is a maxim of stimulative efficacy, which the labours of criticism have most successfully, if not judiciously, contrived to reverse. The fallen state of the human faculties is indeed, a favourite and fundamental position in the jurisprudence of Virtù ; and to express a

But rare the altar smoked—the victim died ; 145
 Deficient incense failing faith supplied,
 The skies defrauded of their fragrant fare,
 And priests deploring, fear'd a famine there.

doubt upon the subject, is considered a sort of professional perverseness—a kind of contempt of court ; which seldom fails to draw down upon the offender the penalties of contumacy, from the indignant tribunal of Taste.

But notwithstanding the established conviction of criticism to the contrary, common sense will be tempted to question, whether Nature has not been as liberal to her younger, as to her elder offspring, whether, she has not reserved for the enterprise of modern times, unnumbered modes of excellence yet untried ; unnumbered tracts of fancy still unexplored,* whose treasures wait but to reward some daring Columbus of the intellectual ocean, who surmounting the prejudices of his age, shall rush into regions of Taste unthought of by former adventurers, and beyond the limits of the ancient world.

Line 148. *And priests deploring, fear'd a famine there.]*
 —It was an opinion prevalent amongst the ancients, that

* *Rerum Natura sacra sua non simul tradit. Initiatos nos credimus ; in vestibulo ejus hæremus.* SEN.

Veniet tempus, quo ista quæ nunc latent, in lucem dies extrahat, et longioris ævi diligentia Veniet tempus quo posteri tam aperta nos nescisse mirentur. SEN.

But fired at length, beyond ambition's flame,
To her religion's aid, her Genius came, 150
And wrought such miracles of Art to prove
His power divine—his mission from above,
That wondering realms the rites of Taste received,
While Greece exulting, gloried and believed.

the Gods fed upon the incense which ascended from the solemn sacrifices, and religious ceremonies of their worshippers on earth. An unbelieving age therefore, they supposed, by diminishing the supply of this celestial luxury, would materially affect the festal comforts of this most convivial host, and perhaps create a famine in heaven.

Line 154. *While Greece exulting, gloried and believed.*]—This account of the progress and effects of Sculpture in the ancient world, appears to be more than poetically true. Winckelman, on the authority of Pausanias, and other writers, states, in his History of the Arts, that in the early ages of Art amongst the Greeks, there were thirty divinities represented by blocks of wood, or by stones, cut into a cubical form. “Ces peuples avoient déjà trente divinités révéérés visiblement dans les tems qu’on ne les représentoient pas encore sous des formes humaines, et qu’on se contentoit des les designer soit par un bloc informe, soit par un pierre cubique, comme faisoient les Arabes et les Amazones.”

But if these gross and barbarous images, derived a gratuitous veneration from the unpolished piety of the earlier

No more the Deity degrades the shrine, 155
Of Genius born, behold a race divine !
Her pregnant Arts such forms of beauty bore,
As made it almost duty to adore :
Such marks of heaven, in each bright feature shone,
As mortals could ascribe to Gods alone ; 160
And tho' false hope in idol power he placed,
The Pagan was half pardon'd for his taste.

Now throned at Elis first, the Olympic sire
Appear'd sublime, amidst the immortal quire :

Pagans, the more pure and perfect representations of the heathen deities, which afterwards replaced them in their temples, soon returned the obligation, and raised by the enthusiasm of Taste, the declining fervour of religious reverence. Quintilian represents the Olympic Jupiter of Phidias, as contributing by its beauty to encrease the religious devotion of the Greeks. “Cujus pulchritudo adjecisse aliquid etiam recepta religione videatur.”

However the absurd and profligate polytheism of the ancients operated to defile the moral attributes of their divinities, the purity of Grecian Taste rescued their personal characteristics, from similar degradation ; and it must be confessed that they have most conspicuously surpassed all other nations in the dignified representation of super-human qualities and celestial natures.

Pride of the Pagan host! the form divine 165
 Betray'd Omnipotence in every line :
 With such an awful brow he bore command,
 And grasp'd the golden sceptre in his hand,
 That e'en celestials might his frown have fear'd,
 Confess'd their sovereign ruler, and revered. 170

Now Pallas too, received her second birth,
 And Phidias' offspring rivall'd Jove's on earth ;

Line 171. *Now Pallas too, received her second birth,*]—
 The Olympic Jupiter, and Minerva, here mentioned, were
 composed principally of ivory and gold, and executed by
 Phidias, during the ascendancy of Pericles at Athens.

“ Ante omnes, tamen Phidias Atheniensis Jove Olympico
 facto, ex *ebore* quidam et *auro* :” is the statement of Pliny ;
 he adds also, “ sed et ex ære signa fecit ;” and in another
 place, “ Phidias præter Jovem Olympicum, quem nemo
 emulatur, fecit et ex *ebore* æque Minervam Athenis, quæ
 est in Parthenone adstans.”

LIB. 37.—6. 8.

These extraordinary statues were of colossal proportion,
 and it appears, that they so much excited the admiration of
 antiquity, as to have been enumerated amongst the wonders
 of the world.

As the art of sculpture, in all its nobler qualities, was
 not thought to have surpassed those earlier examples of its
 powers, notwithstanding that various graces and delicacies

Presiding Wisdom on her brow express'd
 The flame divine that glow'd within her breast;

had been supplied by subsequent ability ; there is the more reason to regret, that the only ideas which we can now form of their excellence, must be derived from the vague evidence of general panegyric. That they were however, considered as excelling in those parts of the Art which are most excellent—as creations of ideal perfection, rather than copies of individual Nature, and that the most elevated conception combined with the most judicious observation of character to produce them, we have sufficient proof in the works of almost all the ancient writers by whom they are mentioned : Phidias himself, is said to have confessed, that his idea of Jupiter, was conceived from Homer's description of that deity ; and Cicero and Seneca, have celebrated these statues as particularly the offspring of the sculptor's mind, ungenerated by any external object.*

* *Nec verò ille artifex, quum faceret Jovis formam aut Minervæ, contemplabatur aliquem e quo similitudinem duceret ; sed ipsius in mente insidebat species pulchritudinis eximia quædam, quem intuens, in eaque defixus, ad illius similitudinem artem et manum dirigebat.*

CICERO, in BRUTO.

The Philosopher indeed, seems but to repeat with more point and compression the observation of the Orator :

Non vidit Phidias Jovem, fecit tamen, velut tonantem ; nec stetit ante oculos ejus Minerva, dignus tamen illa arte animus, et concepit deos et exhibuit.

SENECA. *Rhet. lib. 10.*

While grace and majesty in every part, 175
Proclaim'd the bright divinity of Art.

How far the abilities of Phidias might have operated to recommend a combination, in one work, of materials so different as ivory and gold, must be now merely subject of conjecture ; but accustomed, as we have been, to the purity and simplicity of one material, the association of these substances, would probably, be thought to add no *sculpturesque** value to a modern statue. The Greeks however, seem to have approved of this intermixture of materials in various instances ; and certainly, in matters of Taste, though we should not adopt their opinions with servility, we are bound to consider them with respect.

The fate of these ornaments of ancient sculpture, the Author believes, has never been decisively ascertained. Winckelman states, that Constantinople, amongst many other works of ancient Art, possessed, in the eleventh century, the Jupiter of Phidias : and thinks it probable, that they were all destroyed at the taking of that city, under Badouin, in the thirteenth century.

Line 176. *Proclaim'd the bright divinity of Art.*]—Though the Fine Arts were considered under the general superintendence of Apollo and the Muses, yet, painting was by

* As the Author is not quite convinced that he is, one of those for whom “ *licuit semperque licebit signatum præsent*

But now those ancient glories shine no more,
And Fame records them only to deplore:
Yet rich in what remains, our humbler days,
Condemn'd to copy, and content to praise; 180
Behold the wealth by wondering ages shared,
And grateful triumph in what Time has spared.

the ancients particularly appropriated to Minerva, as adding the qualities of wisdom to those of genius, and uniting to the most finished dexterity of Art, the most profound sagacity of Science.

Barry, in his "Letter to the Dilettanti Society," enlarges a good deal on this subject, and exults with a very justifiable enthusiasm, in the superior estimation which his Art experienced among the Greeks; of which, the appointment of Minerva, as its celestial protectress, he considered so flattering and irrefragable a proof.

nota procudere nummum," he would not have hazarded the word sculpturesque, however adapted to his purpose, if Mr. Knight (whose claim to this Horatian privilege few will contest) had not already introduced it to the English reader (*Analytical Enquiry*, &c.), and justly, though perhaps sarcastically, pointed out the etymological pretensions to our adoption, which, in common with the term *picturesque*, it must be considered to possess.

Lo ! first, where dazzling fair, as poets feign
The sea-born Goddess blushing from the main,
When ravish'd Ocean saw the vision rise, 185
Stole his last kiss, and gave her to the skies,
Love's Queen appears; all hearts her sway confess,
And powerful monarchs plunder, to possess :
The vulgar trophies of the sword despise,
And claim a triumph for their Parian prize. 190

Line 190. *And claim a triumph for their Parian prize.*]—
It has been said, that this statue, which is now placed in the magnificent collection of the Louvre, was for a time in the possession of some of our countrymen on the Continent ; and that measures had been taken, to transport it to England. If this be true, it is not a little mortifying to reflect, that we have lost the opportunity of securing so valuable a prize ; and that the fortune of war has thrown this unrivalled beauty into the arms of the common ravisher of Virtù ; who seems to march a committee of Taste in full activity with every division of his army, and to be as proud of acquiring a picture or a statue, as a province or a state.

Since the sins of the ancient Romans were to be visited upon their posterity, and the sacking of Corinth was to be revenged by the plunder of Rome, the author hopes, that the morality of Taste will not be much scandalized, if he ventures to express some regret, that no part of the spoil

Unrivall'd Form ! beyond Circassia's boast !
Or yet the brighter Fair of Albion's coast !
To thee the Bard, as erst on Ida's hill
Like Paris, would present the apple still ;

has found its way into the public collections of this country. The right of property seems to have been equally violated in every transfer of those venerable relics ; and as the dominion of Taste, is, in the eye of a Painter, as important to our glory, as the dominion of the sea can possibly be to our power, in the opinion of the politician ; the former may surely be excused, if he cannot see why, "*in foro conscientiae*," we might not as justifiably take under our protection, the pictures and statues, as the ships and stores of our friends, to prevent their being converted to the advantage of the common enemy, and to secure the superiority of our arts as well as of our arms.

Had we succeeded in our long projected march to Paris, and acquired by the right of conquest, the privilege of plundering that general repository of imperial pillage ; the Author confesses, that he would have seen with a very patriotic exultation, a detachment of the committee of Taste under some adventurous virtuoso, or a well selected rifle corps of the Royal Academy, appointed to invade all the recesses of the Louvre—to dislodge its most illustrious inhabitants, and as prisoners of war, conduct them to assist in adorning the triumph, and advancing the arts of his country.

His partial eye tho' Painting's glories warm, 195
 And jealous Nature take Olynthia's form.

Line 195. *His partial eye tho' Painting's glories warm,*]—Whatever the powers of an Apelles, a Protogenes, or a Zenxis, might have produced to emulate the perfection of ancient sculpture; it must be confessed, that the pencil of modern times, has furnished no example of female beauty to compare with that which this miracle of Art presents. The most exquisite Venus from the hand of Titian, in conception, form, and character, is much inferior to her marble rival, and the “*velata species*” of the Roman School certainly cannot be said to have supplied an instance of more successful emulation. To the credit of British Art, it may be stated, that, for delicacy of conception, grace of action, and purity of design, the Venus rising from the sea by Barry, however defective in the other qualities of good painting, ranks as high in the scale of competition as any production of modern Taste. Some later efforts of living artists to express in the female form,

“The naked Nature and the living Grace”

have been eminently successful; and the Venus perfuming her hair from the chissel of the veteran Nollekens, wants only the tint of time, and the name of an antique, to be classed amongst the purest examples of Grecian Sculpture.

Line 196. *And jealous Nature take Olynthia's form.*]—Although the works of Art can never equal those of Nature, and the most inspired imagination cannot conceive a

With modest mien the sov'reign Beauty stands,
And seeks to shun the homage she commands,
Averts her face with such a timid air,
The marble seems to burn in blushes there; 200
While grace and ease in every limb unfold,
The Paphian fair that fired the world of old.

Each charm divine that Nature's stores supply,
To fire the Poet's thought or Painter's eye ;

beauty beyond the limits of that excellence which her productions display ; yet, in the selection of those parts which she offers to our view, we may combine in one object, a greater variety of perfections than she is ever found to bestow upon an individual. Though we cannot rival her in the parts, we may contend with her in the whole figure. Though unable to emulate the lustre of her stars, we may arrange our artificial lights in a constellation which shall supply, by its collective brilliancy, the deficiency of individual splendour.

It is only in this view, that the Venus from the hand of Art, can be justly preferred to her animated rivals ; for, however Nature may in parts, occasionally assert her proud superiority, yet in no single form perhaps, has she united so many beauties, as are to be found in this extraordinary example of female symmetry and grace.

Whate'er of Love's elysium Fancy views, 205
Or Heaven unfolds in vision to the Muse,
The curious Artist caught, with care combined,
Fix'd as he found, and as he wrought refined,
Till rapt, the wave's proud offspring he outvies,
And bids a rival from the rock arise. 210
When Nature, watchful of the process, view'd
A form so lovely, from a mass so rude ;
When, in the wond'rous work, she saw her own,
By Art outdone, and e'en excell'd in stone,
Amazed, she paused—confess'd the conquering fair,
Set her bright seal, and stamp'd perfection there. 216
Yet, while we view those beauties which might move
Immortal breasts, and warm a world to love,
No coarse emotions rise, no vulgar fires,
Profane the sacred passion she inspires ; 220
Each sense refined to rapture as we gaze,
Like heav'n's pure angels, finds its bliss in praise.

But see ! where Taste extends her brightest crown,
Unclaim'd amid the contests of renown !
Lost, in the darkest night of time, his name ! 225
By envious fate, defrauded of his fame,
The hand divine ! to whose high pow'rs we owe
The noblest image of a God below !

Bright as on Pindus, crown'd by all the Nine,
Behold Apollo ! Pythian victor shine ! 230
With holy zeal, in Delphic splendour placed,
And still revered—an oracle of Taste !

Line 228. *The noblest image of a God below !*] — This statue affords a striking instance in corroboration of the remark made in a preceding note : it must be confessed, that since our limited faculties, for want of nobler conceptions, can form a God only after man's image, the present is the most dignified celestial representative that can be found in the general assembly of Virtù.

In the Arts, the Pagan superstition seems to have been more inspiring than the true faith : The divinities of the heathen mythology, however profligate and contemptible they appear in the poetry of the Greeks, are certainly very prepossessing in their sculpture, and seem a superior race, when compared with the super-human characters which have been produced by the plastic piety of the Christian world.

If Homer and other ancient Bards, had shewn as much skill and judgment, in describing the moral attributes of their divinities, as the Grecian Artists have displayed in representing their personal characteristics, we should have formed a much more respectable idea of the “Olympian Synod,” and our critics would have been spared the trouble of many a dull dissertation, to reconcile to common poetical propriety, a number of mythological absurdities, which,

He owns full tribute to his godhead given,
 And finds on earth the homage feign'd in heav'n.
 Not with more awful grace, as sung of yore, 235
 The God himself his golden quiver bore ;

to use the expression of Johnson, appear in the eye of common sense, "too glaring for detection, and too gross for aggravation."

The Apollo Belvidere now forms one of the most prominent features in the collection of the Louvre. It is placed very conspicuously, at the head of the apartment which bears its name (Salle d'Apollon), and seems to preside with a "dignity divine" over the marble multitude, by which it is surrounded.

This statue is stated to have been found at the close of the fourteenth century, about twelve leagues from Rome, amongst the ruins of the ancient city of Antium. It appears to be in excellent preservation ; the left hand, and part of the right arm have been supplied by Giovanni Angelo da Metersoli, a pupil of Buonaroti ; but the name of the ancient sculptor is unknown.

Winckelman gives what he calls a description of the Apollo, in which he works hard,

"To be himself the great sublime he draws."

POPE.

He indeed labours in such a poetical extacy, that he almost "assumes the God," and seems half inclined to rival the

When, o'er the Grecian host, in shafts of fire,
 He pour'd swift vengeance at his priest's desire;
 Erect his mien, with ease, the silver bow
 Has just let fly its terrors on the foe; 240

object of his enthusiasm, not only in his personal dignity, but in his prophetic character.*

In a happy strain of discriminative criticism, which has made him the oracle of travelling connoisseurs, and the manual of picture-dealers, he points out a variety of expressions, as incompatible with each other, as inconsistent with that unity and simplicity of character, which is the peculiar excellence of ancient Art. "*Le dédain*," says he, among other observations, "*siège sur ses lèvres, l'indignation qu'il respire gonfle ses narines et monte jusqu'à ses sourcils, mais une paix inalterable est empreinte sur son front et son œil est plein de douceur, comme s'il étoit au milieu des Muses empressées à lui prodiguer leurs caresses.*" Here we have *disdain* seated on his lips, while *indignation* distending his nostrils, mounts upward to the eye-brows: at this point however, it is checked in its progress, by a forehead of un-

* A l'aspect de ce prodige de l'Art j'oublie tout l'univers; je prends moi-même une position plus noble pour le contempler avec dignité.—Saisis de respect, je sens ma poitrine qui se dilate et s'élève, sentiment qui éprouvent ceux qui sont remplis de l'esprit des prophéties.

While, with triumphant step, and eager eye,
 He forward moves to see the monster die.
 Majestic rising from its ample base,
 The polish'd neck uniting strength and grace,
 Bears the bright head aloft, and seems to shine, 245
 The column of a capital divine !

alterable peace. But although indignation has ascended as far as the eye-brow, it seems to have had no effect upon the eye, which is supposed, in ordinary cases, to be somewhat concerned in the expression of that passion ; for we are told, that the eye of this disdainful, indignant, and yet tranquil deity, is as full of sweetness, as if he was represented ogling his favourite Muses at a Parnassian coterie.

The following pompous account of the inauguration of the Apollo in the Louvre, by Buonaparte, will not perhaps be uninteresting to the reader, as it affords a striking instance of the policy with which this crafty conqueror endeavours, like another Augustus, to conceal under the mask of liberality and patronage, the deformity of his usurpation, and entwines the shackles of tyranny with the roses of Taste.

“ Le 16 Brumaire, an 9, le Premier Consul Bonaparte, accompagné du Consul Lebrun, et du Conseiller d'Etat Benezech, a fait l'inauguration de l'Apollon, et à cette occasion il a placée entre la plinthe de la Statue et son piedéstal, l'inscription suivante, gravée sur une table de

In each light limb elastic vigour proves,
 A power immortal, and in marble moves ;
 A form divine, to heav'n's proportions just !
 In grandeur graceful, as in grace august ! 250
 By Taste restored, on some celestial plan,
 Drawn from the great original of man :
 A cast recover'd of that mould divine,
 That stamp'd heaven's image strong in every line,
 When first as earth received him and revered, 255
 The " paragon of animals " appear'd !

bronze, qui lui a été présentée par l'Administrateur et par le Citoyen Vien au nom des Artistes."

" La Statue d' Apollon, qui s'élève sur ce pedestal,

" trouvée à Antium sur la fin du quinziesme siecle,

" placée au Vatican par Jules II. au commencement du

" sixiesme siecle,

" conquise l'an 5 de la République par l'armée d'Italie

" sous les ordres du Général Bonaparte,

" a été fixée ici le 21 Germinal, an 8,

" première année de son consulat."

Au revers est cette autre inscription.

" Bonaparte 1^r Consul.

" Cambaceres 2^{de} Consul.

" Lebrun 3^e Consul.

" Lucien Bonaparte, Ministre de l'Intérieur."

Great shade of Genius ! still decreed to raise
Our pride and wonder, yet elude our praise !
Say, from the skies, where'er by Phidias placed,
Thou takest high station 'mongst the sons of Taste,
While seraphs round, celestial wreaths bestow, 261
And hymn above thy name, unknown below ;
Say, dost thou, pleased, from heaven's immortal bowers,
Behold on earth the triumph of thy powers ?
Thy toil enshrined in Glory's temple view, 265
Through every age the idol of Virtù ?
How oft ! as o'er the waste of ages cast,
The light of learning seem'd to shew the past !
Has pious zeal exploring sought to raise
Thy reverend image to our mental gaze ; 270
To rescue from oblivion's tide thy name,
And stamp it radiant on the rolls of Fame :
But vain the search, thou like a God dost shine,
On earth unknown, but in thy work divine.

Nor less in characters of mortal mould, 275
The powers of Greece transcendent we behold ;
The sage's, patriot's forms, attest her skill,
And all her godlike heroes triumph still.
See ! on his club reclined, Alcides stand !
Holding the Hesperian plunder in his hand ; 280

While slow relaxing, each charged muscle shews
A strength divine subsiding to repose.

Line 279. *See ! on his club reclined, Alcides stund !*]—The fine cast of the Hercules, in the hall of the Royal Academy, if it could be seen, would enable the public to form a very just idea of this noble monument of ancient art: but in its present *buried* state, it can neither be considered useful nor ornamental. That it should be so placed as to assist the purposes of study, and add a little dignity to the scanty materials of improvement which the Academy possesses, was for some time a favourite object with Sir Joshua Reynolds, and according to the evidence of Barry, occupied his thoughts even in his last illness. There is perhaps no member of that Institution so insensible to the interests of his Art, as not to have cordially co-operated with him for this purpose, if by his assistance it could have been effected; but unfortunately, the Academy is lodged with so much more splendour than convenience, that there is not an appropriate place, in which this Colossal figure could be deposited with safety to the floors of the building, and at the same time, with advantage to the views of the establishment.

Thus, this renowned hero, who might be so beneficially employed in assisting to destroy the monsters of bad taste, which infest the various provinces of Virtù, is reduced to a state of inglorious inutility, and condemned to dwell in a dungeon, lest, like Sampson of old, he might pull the house down about his ears.

Whate'er of wond'rous might in mortal frame,
 Remotest legends have transferr'd to Fame,
 The god-like shape surpasses, and appears, 285
 With Atlas, worthy to sustain the spheres :
 Or, cope with him, in holy writ renown'd,
 Who shook the towers of Gaza to the ground.

Yet not th' enormous mass of moulded stone,
 Deludes the eye, impress'd by size alone ; 290
 Proportion'd vigour proves in every part,
 The Statue's symmetry, the Sculptor's art :
 Were such indeed, the Hero famed of old !
 Did every limb such wonderous powers unfold !
 The Poets ill express a force so great, 295
 And for his labours—leisure sports relate.

Nor, Apollonius! shall thy pride remain
 Unhonour'd in the tributary strain :
 Tho' Time remorseless, every member spoil,
 And mutilation mar thy matchless toil, 300
 The mighty fragment shall thy skill proclaim,
 And grateful Taste still guarantee thy fame.

Line 302. *And grateful Taste still guarantee thy fame.*—
 A rival of this celebrated piece of sculpture, both in muti-

Yet Sculpture justly might the strain accuse,
That could to Laocoon the wreath refuse;
For 'mongst her wonders were a choice confess'd, 305
And one bright toil distinguish'd from the rest,

lation and merit, has lately excited the curiosity and admiration of the critical world, in the metropolis. The figure of Theseus, one of the fragments of Grecian art, which have been rescued by the taste and enterprise of Lord Elgin, from the ruins of the temple of Minerva at Athens, contests the palm with the production of Apollonius, and seems to have gained over the connoisseur at least, if not the Artist, to a preference of his pretension.

We must however, make some allowance for the enthusiasm of Taste, and the impression of novelty: he must be a sturdy connoisseur upon whom the name of Phidias has no effect; and who does not find the "*disjecta membra poetæ*," even in the rudest relics of Athenian art.

Lord Elgin's marbles however, are all of them sufficiently interesting in their authenticity, and most of them in their merit, to excite the attention of the public, and form a valuable accession to the scanty stock of Grecian sculpture which we possess. There is hardly an object in the collection, by which either curiosity or Taste may not be informed or gratified; and the Author confesses himself to be one of those, who think, that the noble proprietor deserves well of the Arts, for their introduction to the country.

We should not however, permit our raptures to outrun

Perhaps, though long deciding, we might claim,
For him, the proud pre-eminence of Fame.
Expression there displays her utmost art,
And pleases while she penetrates the heart ; 310

our discretion : there is no occasion to praise them at the expense of productions, with which, to force a comparison seems as injudicious as unnecessary ; and perhaps, it would be prudent to suffer the fervour of our admiration to cool a little, before we crown the brows, even of Theseus himself, with those wreaths which are to be plucked from the Torso, the Hercules, and the Laocoon.

Line 308. *For him, the proud pre-eminence of Fame.*]—Pliny speaking of the Laocoon, which he mentions as then in the palace of the Emperor Titus, “*qui est in Titi Imperatoris domo,*” calls it “*opus omnibus et picturæ et statuariæ preferendum,*” and describes the whole groupe as the production of Agisander and his two sons, Athenodorus and Apollodorus.

They who have had an opportunity of examining this extraordinary work, however they may dissent from the absolute and unqualified preference, which Pliny gives to it, will certainly not be much surprised at it ; for although in sublimity of character, and dignity of expression, some other examples of Grecian Art, may possibly be considered superior, yet, in every other quality of Sculpture, intellectual or mechanical, the Author confesses that he considers it unrivalled.

Like the Apollo, this groupe is now placed, as the prin-

The Father's woes, such strong emotions raise,
 That powerful sympathy suppresses praise ;
 The subject still obtains the Sculptor's boon,
 And Agisander's lost in Laocoon.

principal object in an apartment of the Louvre, called " Salle de Laocoon ;" and from the extraordinary boldness and freedom of its execution, it appears to surpass the casts and copies that have been made from it, in a greater degree than any of the great works by which it is surrounded.

The time and place of its discovery, with other particulars respecting it, are to be learned from Winckelman ; who in describing it, indulges all his enthusiasm, and more than his usual discrimination.

The following may serve as a specimen :

" La tendresse paternelle de Laocoon se manifeste dans ses regards languissans : la compassion paroît nager sur ses prunelles comme une sombre vapeur. Sa physionomie exprime les plaintes et non pas les cris. Ses yeux dirigés vers le ciel, implorent l'assistance suprême. Sa bouche respire la langueur, et la levre inférieure qui descend en est accablée ; mais dans la levre supérieure qui est tirée en haut, cette langueur est jointe à une sensation douloureuse. La souffrance mêlée d'indignation sur l'injuste chatimens, remonte jusqu'au nez, le gonfle, et éclate dans les narines, élongés et exhaussés. Au-dessous du front est rendu avec la plus grande sagacité ; le combat entre la douleur et la résistance, qui sont comme réunies en un point : car pendant que celle-là fait

What mortal pangs the impassion'd stone reveals !
The tortured frame through every fibre feels ! 316
While curling close around, in fatal folds,
His hapless prey the monster Serpent holds,

remonter les sourcils, celle-ci comprime les chairs du haut de l'œil, et les fait descendre vers la paupière supérieure qui en est presque toute couverte."

No sentimental dissector of mixed passion, in a dilettanti delirium, ever surpassed this exquisite specimen of profound criticism and appropriate panegyric. The tortures produced by the serpents, are nothing compared with those which Laocoon suffers from the Connoisseur. Every feature is put to the rack of expression, and compelled to play an independent part in the general scuffle of conflicting emotion. The eyes in particular are obliged to perform double duty ; for, not to dwell on the " paternal tenderness in languishing looks," they are made to express at once pity for his children, and to implore it for himself ; languor depresses one lip, and by the help of a painful sensation, draws up the other, while agony and indignation take possession of the nose : no ordinary common-place indignation ; but an intelligent explanatory passion that announces the cause while it exhibits the effect. The forehead, or rather under the forehead, is a field of battle, in which is displayed with the greatest sagacity, the combat between pain and resistance, the one manœuvring the eye-brows, and the other the eye-lids, through the most approved evolutions of agony and grimace.

Grace finds a wreath in agony severe,
And pain and terror picturesque appear. 320

What wonders still the stores of Greece display!
What crowding deities demand the lay!

Line 320. *And pain and terror picturesque appear.*]—
There is no principle in the Arts more important than that which requires us to select for imitation such subjects only, as are calculated to present on the whole, an agreeable object to the spectator. Whatever the eye would turn from with aversion or disgust, is unfit for the pencil, and may be said to succeed the worse for being well represented,

“*Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet,*”
is a precept of Taste as applicable to the graphic as the poetic stage.

Nor need the painter fear, that an adherence to this rule, would weaken the impression of his productions, or restrain him in the exercise of the higher powers of his art. It is not necessary to wound the feelings, in order to awaken them—to tear the string, in order to make it vibrate with effect. We must distinguish between a powerful, and a painful sensation, and not mistake the inhuman and the horrible, for the affecting and the sublime.

To paint a beautiful female with a sword plunged into her breast, and sticking in the ensanguined wound, affords an object as little pathetic, as it is picturesque: it is re-

What forms of mythologic glory rise,
To justify the pride of Pagan skies !
In every attribute of Beauty glow, 325
And grace the elysium of Virtù below !

volting alike to sensibility and taste, and however skilfully executed, can produce no other feelings, than those of horror and aversion. Yet two great artists, Correggio and Domenichino, have chosen to represent a circumstance of this kind, in two celebrated works ; St. Placide, by the former, and the Martyrdom of St. Agnes, by the latter. Rubens also, in his picture of the Crucifixion, has exhibited the Soldier, at the moment when he is thrusting the spear into the body of Christ.

The feelings of an Artist, if not his taste, should prevent him from dwelling on a subject of this kind, and convince him in time, of the injudiciousness of his choice, in its adoption. The most formidable terrors and affecting circumstances of the Painter and the Poet, must be invested with a charm, sufficiently powerful to make us contemplate them with pleasure, and quit them with regret.

The ancients seem to have been more impressed by this principle than the moderns. They seldom weakened the effect of their skill, by an injudicious choice of their subject. They sweetened strong emotion to the palate of Sensibility and Taste, and strewed the wildest regions of pity and terror with the flowers of instruction and delight.

Their Sculptors in particular, were scrupulously attentive

But vain the task ! beyond the Muse's boast !
To trace Art's triumphs through the heathen host,
Or, mark what varied traits, in every line,
Discriminate their qualities divine. 330

to this prime law of their art : with them every consideration was subordinate to the production of beauty, and the preservation of character : action was never urged to distortion, nor expression aggravated to grimace.

One of the strongest examples of their excellence in this respect, is to be found in the Statue mentioned in the text. The most powerful emotions of the soul are, in this work, represented with the least possible sacrifice of form or grace. The most afflicting circumstances are so judiciously displayed, that while they excite our sympathy, they also extort our admiration. Laocoon expresses his sufferings strongly, but not ungracefully. His features, though agitated, are not deformed ; and though every limb is affected by the anguish which he endures, there are no awkward contractions of impatient violence, or vulgar gesticulation.

The observations of Winckelman upon the Laocoon, and indeed upon every other work of Taste which he describes, are in the highest style of that penetrating class of critics, who unacquainted with the real powers of the art about which they treat, are always sure to see much more than their author intended, or than his work could possibly express. His admiration delights to dwell in little distinctions, and delicate discriminations ; he loses sight of the leading

As when disaster'd on Norwegia's strand
 The wreck of some proud galley floats to land,
 The rude inhabitants with rapture save
 Each shatter'd fragment wafted on the wave,

sentiment—the grand character which the Artist has impressed upon his work, to follow the refinements of imaginary emotion, in the corner of a mouth, or the cut of an eye-brow. He gravely parcels out the face like a map of the passions—finds in every feature a different sentiment, and thinks, when he has set them all at variance, that he has pronounced a panegyric on the whole.

Criticism in the hands of Winckelman, and those who resemble him, is precisely that which has been so well described by La Bruyere: “*La critique souvent n'est pas une science: c'est un métier où il faut plus de santé que d'esprit, plus de travail que de capacité, plus d'habitude que de génie.*”

The mortifying deceptions which were passed upon him, for the purpose of exposing his presumption, had little effect in repressing it. He was to the last the “mighty Scholiast of Taste,

“ ——— that awful Aristarch,

“ Whose front was plough'd with many a deep remark ;”

POPE.

before whom the artist and the connoisseur were alike dismayed and discomfited. By the fiat of absolute authority he divided the whole empire of *Virtù*, assigning the province

And think, while grateful for the wealth supplied, 335
 What better stores lie buried in the tide.
 Thus, from the wreck of years, a sacred prize !
 The rich remains of ancient Art arise ;

of Genius to his friend Mengs the painter, and reserving the department of Taste for himself.

The wonders of mixed passion may be said to be the rock upon which the mere critic in Art is always sure to split ; and an ambition to display great delicacy of discrimination on this subject, seems to have been as much the characteristic of the ancient as the modern dilettanti. Pliny, who, whatever may be thought of him as a philosopher, must certainly be considered rather credulous as a connoisseur, relates some curious instances of the power of expression which have not been surpassed by the fanciful refinements of modern Taste.

A statue of Paris, by Euphranor, particularly, he describes as so miraculously expressive, not only of the principal qualities of that gallant Trojan, but even of the most conspicuous occurrences of his life, that you might discover in him at once, the *judge of the three Goddesses*, the *lover of Helen*, and the *slayer of Achilles*. Euphranoris Alexander Paris, est, in qua laudatur quod omnia simul intelligantur ; judex dearum, amator Helenæ, et tamen Achillis interfector." Winckelman, whose faith in the miracles of *ancient Art*, is edifying to the whole community of criticism, relates this without a comment of surprise or incredulity.

And while in wonder wrapt, our ruder age,
The trophies of the Grecian world engage, 340
We judge what splendours must her prime have graced,
When these are but the fragments of her Taste.

An eminent poet of the present day, Mr. Hayley, has not carried his devotion quite so far ; in his " Essay on Sculpture," he mentions this paragon of expression, as recorded by Pliny, and states that the French Sculptor Falconet censures that author for his description of it ; adding also with a modest reserve, not common amongst those who treat of matters of Taste *en amateur*, " whether justly or not, let Artists decide."

The right of judgment, which in this instance, Mr. Hayley grants to Artists, will probably be considered by connoisseurs more confident, if not more competent, as a very indiscreet concession. The Winckelmans and the Webbs, will certainly protest against such an unguarded surrender of their critical privileges ; and indeed, as Artists commonly betray the most provoking insensibility to those indefinable perfections which critics discover so easily, and feel so exquisitely *in the productions of the ancients* ; it is more than probable, that were they impannelled to try the cause, " Falconet versus Pliny," the Roman Connoisseur would be cast by a professional verdict.

It must not be concealed however, that the critics, with respect to this question, have an authority on their side, of which they have some reason to be proud. A late learned

Touch gently as thou fliest, O Time ! with care
Approach those precious relics—prize and spare.

Professor of Painting, in the Royal Academy, has, ex officio, taken the field, in defence of Pliny, and broken a lance with Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The Professor charges the President with giving a paraphrase of the passage in Pliny, and “lending to it the mixtures he disapproves.” The reader will have perceived, from the quotation above given, that Pliny states three distinct characters to have been expressed in the statue of Paris: the judge of the three Goddesses, the lover of Helen, and the slayer (or if the Professor thinks the term more accurate,) the murderer of Achilles. As character can be traced in a work of Art or Nature, only from the presence of its peculiar indications, Reynolds supposes, that where the three characters above mentioned, were discoverable, they must have been expressed by “stately dignity, stern valour, and youthful elegance.” The President has not perhaps, been very discriminative in the selection of those qualities; for the gallant umpire of the three rival Beauties, does not require to be represented with the stately dignity of a judge on the bench; neither is stern valour the appropriate indication of the slayer of Achilles. The “mixtures” of the President therefore, are certainly not made up according to the recipe of Pliny, but they will not become much more palatable by the correction of the Professor; for it is not easy to see what is gained towards the defence of Pliny, by substituting the traits of a murderer for the characteristics of a conqueror. When the

Long as thy course hath been, since first began 345
 The reign of Nature, and the race of man ;

Professor himself however, tries his hand at a "mixture," he certainly surpasses the ancient and modern critic, as much in the number of his ingredients, as in the skill with which they are compounded : for he supposes *acute inspection*, *dignified deliberation*, and *enamoured eagerness* combined in this extraordinary statue, with the indications of *desertion*, *seduction*, and *assassination*.

"The *acute inspector*, the elegant umpire of female form, receiving the contested pledge with a *dignified pause*, or with *enamoured eagerness*, presenting it to the arbitress of his destiny, was probably the predominant idea of the figure : whilst the *deserter* of Æonone, the *seducer* of Helen, the *subtle archer*, that *future murderer* of Achilles, lurked under the *insidious eye-brow*, and in the *penetrating glance* of Beauty's chosen minion.

"Such appeared to me the character and expression of the sitting Paris in the voluptuous Phrygian dress, formerly in the cortile of the palace Altheims at Rome."

FUZELI'S Lectures, page 48

To consider the various instances in which imaginary and often incompatible perfections have been discovered in *celebrated* productions, by ancient as well as modern critics, would too much extend the limits of this note : but the Author cannot forbear to mention another of Pliny's wonders, which has excited the exclamatory raptures of that "second Daniel" in discriminative criticism—Mr. Webb.

Pliny, speaking of Aristides, says "*Hujus pictura est*

Say, through the world's wide circuit, say, if aught
 E'er charm'd thine eye, to such perfection wrought !

oppido capto, ad matris morientis e vulnere mammam adrepens infans: intelligiturque sentire mater, et timere, *ne emortuo lacte sanguinem infans lambat.*" Thus translated by Mr. Webb. "By him (Aristides) was painted a town taken by storm, in which was seen an infant creeping to the breast of its mother, who, though *expiring from her wounds, yet expresses an apprehension and fear lest the course of her milk being stopt, the child should suck her blood.*"

This must certainly be considered the most extraordinary achievement in the way of expression, that is to be found in the records of criticism. The political significance of *Burleigh's nod*, in "the Critic," fails on a comparison with such a prodigy of *prospective* emotion—cause and effect—existing circumstances, and contingent consequences—all combined in one point of pathetic pungency—mixed up in a physiognomical melange for the gratification of refined feeling and pure taste.

If the *servile* Professors—the *mere mechanics* of modern times, were but competent to "enter thus feelingly into the *inmost* workings of the human soul," were but gifted with a little of that discriminating sagacity, of which connoisseurs of Mr. Webb's calibre are always found to have so much, what wonders might we not behold performed upon "the human face divine !" To read the eyes would be no longer a figurative expression ; we should have a process

And thou, blind Chance ! eventful power ! whose sway,
Disordering life, sublunar things obey ; 350

of reasoning carried on in wrinkles, features drawing inferences, assents in smiles, and negatives in frowns ; we should find muscles making metaphysical distinctions, delicate emotions dimpling in all directions, and prophetic passions announcing in premature agonies, conjectural events and contingent consequences.

Those nice distinctions, and imaginary shades of expression are the favourite common-places of vulgar panegyric, and always over-run the writings of those who describe in a work of Art, not what they see or feel, but what they think may best become their penetration to discover, and their eloquence to express.

The painter who wanders in the maze of mixed passion will find, that all the clues of criticism are inadequate to extricate him. If he consults Nature more accurately, he will perceive that he has mistaken a rapid succession of emotions for their simultaneous existence, and that to render one strong expression with effect, will sufficiently employ all the powers, and answer all the purposes of his art.

Line 248. *E'er charm'd thine eye, to such perfection wrought !]*

—If perfection could be supposed to exist in any of the productions of man, the Sculpture of the ancient Greeks, would appear to have the best claim to that character. If any of the works of Art could be allowed to super-

Thee too, the Muse, could aught of pray'r revoke
Thy random rage, or stay thy sudden stroke,

cede in our studies the necessity of resorting to Nature, or deserve to be established as a standard of Beauty and of Truth, preferable to that which her varied excellence supplies, their finest statues might justly aspire to exercise such an influence, and to be honoured with such a distinction.

When the end proposed in their sculpture is compared with the means of effecting it which they possessed, it will be difficult (according to the Author's conception) to produce an instance, throughout the whole circle of human ingenuity, in which the powers of Genius have been exercised with such striking success ; or in which the materials offered by Nature to the hand of Art, have been used with a selection so discriminating, an application so appropriate, and a science so enlightened and profound.

The poetry of Homer has perhaps, enjoyed the admiration of mankind, in a greater degree than any other production of human genius ; all ages and countries to which the light of learning has extended, have admitted its superiority, and united in its praise ; and some pedantic enthusiasts, not content with ascribing to it every literary excellence, have gone so far as to affect to discover in it, the principles of every Art and Science. Yet, notwithstanding the pre-eminent merits of Homer, and the universal applauses which they have excited, the Author conceives,

Would pray forbear, nor with rude hand deface
What ages can't supply, nor Art replace.

Hail, awful Shade! that o'er the mould'ring urn 355
Of thy departed greatness lovest to mourn ;

that he must have something like the devotion of a Dacier, who can consider the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* as examples of perfect composition ; or who does not discover in them, defects, which, only our veneration for antiquity could approve or excuse.

The perfection which is not to be found in Homer, will be sought for in vain, amongst his imitators and successors ; and the annals of poetry, considered without prejudice, do not offer to our view any example of such unqualified excellence, as to preclude the hope of further improvement, or prevent the expectation, that Genius may advance in the future, upon the eminence of the past.

The Arts of design in modern times, although they display a proficiency which claims our warmest panegyric, cannot be considered as having a claim to the character of perfection ; for without putting their best examples in competition with the works of the ancients, we have only to look round us upon the beauties of Nature, in order to be convinced of their defects, even while we are made sensible of their merits.

To the wonders of ancient sculpture only, can be attributed that finished excellence, in which the art of man

Deploring deep the waste where, once unfurl'd,
Thy ensigns glitter'd o'er a wond'ring world.
Spirit of ancient Greece! whose form sublime;
Gigantic striding, walks the waves of Time ; 860

appears to have touched the utmost limits of exertion, and to triumph in the full accomplishment of its object.

The severest scrutiny of their pretensions, tends but the more firmly to secure to them our admiration, and the impressions of our sensibility are strengthened by the results of our reflection. The more we try them by the standard of Nature, the more we are astonished at the skill and success with which her most exquisite charms have been selected and combined ; leaving nothing to be added by emulation, or desired by Taste.

Who, that contemplates the Apollo, or the Venus, the Hercules or the Laocoon, the Gladiator or the Antinous, can point out a means of their improvement; or entertain a hope to see them surpassed ? They rise above our highest measures of sublimity and grace ; they exceed our most studied conceptions of character and proportion, and satisfy the imagination in its warmest visions of human beauty. Before them, criticism subsides into admiration, ambition is awed to despondency, and even Genius is humbled to imitation.

Let it not be supposed; that the veneration which the Author expresses for those great works, is inconsistent with that freedom of taste which he is as ambitious to cherish, as he is, he fears, inadequate to recommend. A just

Whose voice from out the tomb of ages came,
And fired mankind to freedom and to fame :
Beneath thy sway how life's pure flame aspired !
How Genius kindled, and how Glory fired !

sensibility to their excellence, must be distinguished from a blind submission to their authority: he would revere them as examples, but not be bound by them as precedents: he admits their influence, but not their prerogative: he will bow in voluntary homage with learning and science, but he disclaims the servility of vassalage, and would repel the compulsion of criticism.

The Author's panegyric however, must be understood, as applicable only to the productions of the first class of ancient sculpture: the examples of the second order which have descended to us, though wrought upon the same principles of taste which carried the former to such perfection, are greatly inferior to them, and have been not only equalled, but surpassed by the ability of latter times. As to that mass of mediocrity which passes under the general name of antiques, much of it is of modern manufacture, and, most of it possesses no other character of interest, than as it tends to illustrate the history of ancient art, and affords to the pedantry of criticism, an opportunity of displaying how much deep erudition may consist with little judgment and less taste.

The genius of modern times is oppressed beneath this load of ancient lumber: it occupies, to the exclusion of

How Taste, refining sense—exalting soul, 365
 Enfranchised mind from passion's coarse control !
 Aroused to deeds, by heav'n and earth revered,
 While all the majesty of man appear'd.
 How vast our debt to thee, immortal Pow'r !
 Our widow'd world subsists but on thy dower ; 370

worthier objects, the time and the attention of the connoisseur, who prefers the *hortus siccus* of Virtù, to the living luxuriance of Art ; and thinks, that he compensates for the coldness and insensibility with which he regards the merits of the present age, by the rapturous avidity with which he collects and venerates the rubbish of the past.

Line 369. *How vast our debt to thee, immortal Pow'r !*]—
 The more we consider the history, or contemplate the productions of the Greeks, the stronger seem to be the claims of that extraordinary race upon our respect and admiration. They may be said to be the first people who raised to their just estimation the qualities of mind, and turning from the gross allurements of power and fortune, paid homage to Genius and Virtue.

Amongst them, man appears to have assumed his most exalted character—to have worn the noblest aspect of his nature, and put forth the most comprehensive powers of his soul. The extent to which latter ages have profited by their means, it is scarcely possible to calculate, for where they are not our immediate, they will be often found our

Like Caria's queen, our relict ages raise
But monumental trophies to thy praise !

remote instructors, and when we do not receive the direct ray, we are enlightened by the reflection.

Their knowledge, like a mighty river, has flowed down upon the modern world, fertilizing all the regions of Genius, and feeding even those springs which have been supposed the most independent of such a supply. Throughout the whole progress of our civilization, we trace the agency of their principles, or the influence of their example ; and whatever we cultivate, the best fruits of the garden are those which have contracted their flavour, or have grown upon their stock. In arts, politics, and literature, they have been the great masters of mankind.

But, however important our obligations to their genius in the other departments of knowledge, it is in the pursuits of Taste that we are most conspicuously their debtors. Here it is ! that they have established an ascendancy which remains unshaken by time ; while ages of ambition and exertion on our part, have left us still, their distant imitators, and humble dependants.

Their rapid progress and unrivalled excellence in the Arts, have been often the objects of enquiry, and might well merit more elucidation than can be displayed within the compass of a note ; for to discover the causes of their pre-eminence, is to account for our own inferiority, and

Lo ! from the ashes of thy arts arise,
Those phoenix fires that glitter in our skies ;

the first step towards a cure, is to ascertain the nature of the disease.

As far however, as the Author is acquainted with the researches of the curious, and the labours of the learned on this subject, he is disposed to think, that too much stress has been laid on causes which appear to be doubtful, indirect, or inadequate, and too little, on those which he considers direct, invariable, and effectual. Reasons have been sought for, not so much where they were to be found, as where we wished to find them—more to suit a theory, than to settle the truth.

Thus, all the changes have been rung upon the climate, the government, the religion, and the athletic exercises of the Greeks ; as if they were the only people that ever enjoyed the benefit of a warm sun, or a free system—that ever attempted to make images of their Gods, or could boast an opportunity of observing a naked limb, or a muscular form.

That the local, political, and religious circumstances of the ancients, have had an influence to a certain extent, and may have afforded considerable facilities to the cultivation of the Arts, the Author is by no means inclined to deny. He cannot however, agree in the opinion which allows them an agency so important as that which has been usually ascribed to them. He thinks that the extraordinary

Thy sun, long set, still lends a twilight ray, 375
That cheers our colder clime, and darker day ;

superiority of the Greeks in every department of Taste, cannot be satisfactorily traced to these sources, and believes that the operation of agents less noticed, has been much more effective in producing it.

The question of climate has been discussed by abler pens ; and luckily, although it may be thought of some consequence, whether we exercise our faculties in the torrid or the frigid zone, yet, the edifying speculations of those weather-wise philosophers, who regulate by the barometer the gradations of wit, and will allow no flower of Taste to bloom in a cold atmosphere, or a cloudy sky, are now too generally rejected to require a remark or a refutation.

That the Arts flourish, only under a free government, is an opinion, not so easy to establish as it is agreeable to maintain. The Author, as a friend to freedom, would be pleased to find the position confirmed by experience ; and would see with pride the cap of liberty exclusively decorated by those attractive ornaments. Unfortunately however, it does not appear, that the brightest æras of Taste have been coincident with the purest periods of freedom, and the splendid days of Pericles and Alexander—of Augustus—of Leo, and of Louis, would seem rather to countenance an opposite doctrine. The Muses, like most other ladies, are fond of homage and attention ; they are attracted by splendour, and conciliated by politeness ; and

Exhales high feelings from our glowing hearts,
Inflames our Genius and refines our Arts :

notwithstanding the warm assurances to the contrary, of some very respectable poetical and philosophical authorities, it is not yet quite certain, that in a contest for their favour, they would not prefer the Prince to the Republican.

The religious system of the ancients must have had more influence in the promotion of their Arts. The fables of polytheism, furnished an inexhaustible variety of subjects ; and as their temples and public edifices were profusely adorned with the statues of their Gods, it naturally became an object of solicitude, that the image should not be unworthy of the divinity and the shrine. The custom also, of representing their gods and heroes, unincumbered with drapery, rendered the study of the human figure not only familiar but essential.

Their religion however, though from the opportunities which it afforded, it must have undoubtedly tended to advance the Arts in Greece, yet does not appear to have been a primary cause of their unequalled excellence. It was a constant source of their employment, but not the active stimulus of their perfection. When cultivated as a secondary object, the Arts never put forth all their splendours : They are cold and reserved to those who use them as accessory to other ends.

The advantage of more frequently beholding the naked

Still at thy shrine, the hero's vows aspire,
The patriot kindles there his purest fire ; 380

form, which the manners, the games, and athletic exercises of the Greeks so generally allowed, appears to be considerably over-rated in the estimate of those who lay much stress upon that circumstance.

The opportunities of transient observation, supplied by such means, act but in feeble co-operation with that severe and vigilant examination of his model which is required from the Artist. A Sculptor of the present day, would not consider the practice of frequenting our pugilistic Academies, as a very important accessory to his ordinary means of improvement, although some benefit would doubtless result from even a loose observation of the muscular forms which are sometimes to be seen there: he knows however, that if he would examine them to any purpose, he must take them to his study, where he can view them undisturbed, and consider, compare, and judge through a long process of patient toil, and persevering attention. The face is uncovered in all countries; it offers itself constantly to our observation; and frequently amongst our fair countrywomen, in subjects that might rival the Helens and Phrynés of antiquity: yet our inferiority to the Greeks is in nothing more conspicuous than in the character, symmetry, and beauty of the human countenance.

The operation of the causes above stated, though favourable to the progress of the Arts amongst the ancients, will

Thy virtues still applauding ages crown,
And rest on thy foundations their renown !

not sufficiently account for the decided superiority which they have displayed. Similar agents have prevailed in other countries, without any corresponding influence upon the advancement of Taste. The Romans enjoyed as happy a climate as the Greeks, were as free, professed the same religion, and by their games and public exercises, furnished nearly similar opportunities of studying the human form in circumstances of great muscular energy : yet the Romans never approached to the excellence of Grecian Art. Compared with the Greeks indeed, they may be said to have been, even in the most flourishing period of their history, a rude unpolished race ; austere and unamiable in their virtues ; gross and sensual in their vices ; coarse and cruel in their amusements. War was their occupation, and dominion their ambition. They even exulted in a disregard of those pursuits which are the delicate offspring of peace and refinement, "*hæ tibi erunt artes, &c.*;" and were indebted for whatever of good taste existed amongst them, to the genius of that people whom they oppressed, plundered, and despised.

It is not in the operation of circumstances which have characterised the Greeks, in common with the inhabitants of other countries, that we shall find a clue to the mystery of their extraordinary pre-eminence in the Fine Arts. It is not in the influence of agents, which, though favourable to their advancement, act but remotely and indirectly,

Beneath the mighty ruins of thy name,
We build our humbler edifice of Fame,

that the stimulus of their perfection is to be discovered. We must look to causes which have been in a great measure, peculiar to them as a people—to causes, which bear directly on the point in question ; and which can be proved to work invariably and effectually to the same end, wherever, and in whatever proportion they have been known to exist. This will perhaps, enable us to solve the problem by means obvious, simple, and natural ; without the aid of an ingenious theory, or a philosophical disquisition. We shall then perhaps, be convinced, that the powers of the human mind attained to their highest perfection in Greece, because they were there more esteemed, and less restricted than in any succeeding nation. In their enthusiastic love for the Arts, we shall discover the secret of their excellence in them. In their peculiar sensibility to the pleasures of Taste ; in their admiration of Beauty and Grace ; in the generous and enlightened alacrity with which they paid homage to Genius ; and the inspiring protection and respect with which they encouraged and rewarded his exertions, we shall find sufficient to account for the splendour of those productions, which have excited the wonder and baffled the imitation of the modern world.

These are the causes which conspire effectually in the production of great men, great actions, and great works. These are the true stimuli of Genius—the moving powers

Collect each shatter'd part, each shining stone 385
Of thy magnificence, by Time o'erthrown,

of Taste—the wedge, the screw, and the lever, without which the Artist droops to the imbecility of a mechanic deprived of his tools. Wherever those dispositions prevail, the Arts will prosper—under any form of government, monarchical, aristocratical, or republican—under any system of religion, Jewish, Christian, or Mahometan—in any degree of climate within the limits of animal accommodation and civilized intercourse.

The partial revival of these causes excited the Arts to comparative excellence, amidst the turbulent factions of Florence, the religious fulminations of Leo, and in the dissolute despotism of Louis the Fourteenth. That they have shone with diminished lustre in latter times, is to be ascribed to the general decay of those causes—to the influence of pride upon Taste—to the triumph of wealth over merit. It is not political but mental freedom that is wanting to their promotion. It is not the influence of Christianity, as some modern sages have supposed, but the bigotry of criticism, that has crippled and impeded their progress. It is not the physical climate that is unfavourable, but the intellectual climate that in a general frost of feeling, nips the tender growth of Taste.

“The Arts degenerate in the ungenial air,

“And every flower of Fancy withers there.”

If the Arts have lost their power and dignity amongst us, it

Arrange the rich materials, rapt, amazed,
And wonder at the palace we have raised!

is because they are deprived of their just rank in the scale of distinction. If they have become mercenary and mechanical, it is because they are degraded to a trade. We tie them down to the earth, and then complain that they do not soar to their ancient heights: we strip them of their noblest plumes, and wonder at the weakness of their wing.

It is not the genius of the moderns that is defective, but the character and tendency of our pursuits that are unfavourable to the developement of its powers. It is not the seed or the soil that is unfruitful, but the husbandry that is careless and injudicious. There is no garden ground allowed in the intellectual agriculture of the times: the whole surface of society is so ploughed up in one vast arable of politics and trade, that not a rood or perch can be spared to the tillage of Taste.

Let us not asperse the abilities of our age, or believe that Nature has exhausted all her bounty upon the ancients: the same causes have always produced the same effects, and great excellence has not failed to result from extraordinary stimuli, in the latter, as well as the former period of the world. All the honours and rewards, which the manners and institutions of modern society can devise or bestow, have been zealously conferred on eminence in oratory and arms; in these pursuits therefore, we have

more than rivalled the exploits of antiquity : their Conons, and Lysanders, would ill bear a comparison with the Marlboroughs and Nelsons of modern warfare. Demosthenes and Eschines, Cicero and Carbo, might yield the palm without a blush, to the Pitts, the Foxes, the Burkes, and the Sheridans of our day. In science also, where we have freed our faculties from the dominion of prejudice, and ventured to think for ourselves ; where criticism has not been able to repress experiment, or impose the arbitrary practice of one age, as the established law of the succeeding, we have triumphed over the delusions of theory, and the dreams of speculation. In short, wherever the moderns have had fair play in the race, they have run head to head with their ancient competitors, and vindicated the character of their Genius, and the impartiality of Nature.

Before we can hope to rival the Greeks in the perfection of those Arts, which have constituted their glory, and secured their immortality, we must endeavour to acquire some of their feelings, as well as their fragments : we must adopt their principles, as well as imitate their productions : we must, like them, ascend to the source of all human perfection ; emancipate the mind from the shackles of criticism, and set our faculties free to range in fearless confidence the boundless regions of Nature. But, above all, we must endeavour to resemble them in the generous sensibility with which they regarded and rewarded those, who plunging into the gulph of study, devoted themselves to the best interests of their country. We must imitate their inspiring respect for merit. We must learn to look on

Genius as the true nobility of Nature, bearing the patent of heaven for honour and distinction upon earth ; the true " Corinthian capital" of society, supporting the glory of nations and the dignity of man, long after the artificial props of Princes and of Peers have crumbled to decay.

CANTO THIRD.

ARGUMENT.

The Student reviews his progress, and proceeds with increased ardour—having ascended, through a course of preparatory studies, the prospect of Art begins to open before him, and he looks with confidence to the highest elevation of Taste—caution not to be too sanguine, or to presume too much on premature talents—prodigies of early excellence unknown in painting—necessity of determining in which path of Art the Student shall employ his powers—propriety of confining his efforts to one object—danger of dissipating our powers in a variety of pursuits, illustrated by the character of Hilario—exhortation to the Student, to devote himself to the higher departments of Art, in defiance of the obstructions which arise from the mercenary spirit of the age—allusion to portrait-painting, and the embarrassments which attend the practice of that part of the profession—necessity of studying the works of our predecessors—allusion to the painters of antiquity—regret expressed for the loss of their productions, which are supposed to have been equal in excellence to their sculpture—the empire of Taste established in Italy, to compensate the subversion of her power—the Roman School—character of Raphael—of Michael Angelo—the Flemish School—Rubens—the Venetian—Titian—the School of Bologna—the Carracci allusion to their style of art—allusion to the many other great painters who deserve distinction and admiration—Correggio—Rembrandt—Poussin—Paul Veronesé—something to be learned from each by a judicious process of study—the Dutch school—affectation of those who endeavour to decry their productions—character and claims of their Art, considered as a faithful imitation of familiar life and common nature—difficulty of obtaining access to the best productions of the old masters, arising from their seclusion in the collections of those, who occupied in the barren gratification of Taste, neglect to promote the fertility of Genius.

CANTO III.



Hoc sit primum in præceptis meis, ut demonstremus quem
imitemur.

CICERO

AS when, slow-labouring up a mountain's side,
 Whose misty summit cleaves th' etherial tide,
 Safe on some midway crag, awhile relieved,
 We turn to view the arduous height achieved,
 Behold, in breathless joy, th' expanding plain, 5
 And with recruited vigour climb again.
 Ascending thus, thro' various toils of Art,
 Secure in hope, and skill'd in every part,
 The ardent youth exulting feels his force,
 Perceives his progress, and renews his course : 10
 Now wider scenes, superior joys supply,
 Sublimar beauties greet his glowing eye,

He darts o'er distant hills his eager sight,
And pants in fancy on the proudest height.
Yet not too sanguine, let your strength untried 15
Despise those aids experience has supplied;

Line 14. *And pants in fancy on the proudest height.*] —
This perhaps may be called the most delightful stage of study to the young painter: he has been, hitherto, traversing a thorny path, plodding in the rough road of rudiments; at every step encountering obstructions formidable to his weakness, and magnified by his fears.

But now, the country begins to open before him, and more secure of his footing, he raises his head to observe the beauties in his view; all is now ardour and hope—pleasure and impetuosity: the first difficulties, which always appear to be the most formidable, have been happily surmounted;—his hand is obedient to his eye—his pencil flows with some facility, and he is well grounded in all the collateral studies of his Art: in short, he considers himself as having amassed all the materials of merit, and has but to choose what wreath of Taste shall decorate his brow.

This fearless confidence, is almost essential to his advancement; it gives a new spring to his energy and his application; it is a cordial that invigorates his spirit for greater exertion; a kind delusion spread before his eyes, to conceal or soften those more serious difficulties of his course, from which, if he was acquainted with their full extent, he would inevitably shrink in apprehension and

Nor vainly hope, whate'er your powers appear,
To bear the palm in premature career.
Let other Arts from cradles still recruit,
And force from forward spring a sickly fruit; 20
With infant prodigies confound our age,
And pour the nurs'ry on the public stage:
No graphic wreaths on school-boy brows are placed,
No beardless Tyro bends the bow of Taste;

dismay. But this sanguine temperament is not unattended with danger : the cordial may intoxicate instead of strengthening : the delusion of hope may become the veil of vanity. Too little confidence sometimes mars a genius, but too much, always makes a coxcomb. Continued elation denotes a want of sensibility ; continued depression, a want of spirit : they are both equally fatal to our progress, for in the one case we fall by presumption, and in the other we fail through fear.

The true temper of Genius, is of the intermitting cast ; hot and cold by turns : an alternation of hope and disappointment ; the former operating to rebrace those powers which have been relaxed by the latter. He who has been often disappointed, will cease to be sanguine if he be not a fool ; but he will also forbear to despond if he be wise. In a new effort, he will better measure his distance, and make up by steadiness what he has lost in impetuosity. Being less confident he will be more cautious, and perhaps succeed to his wish, because he suspects that he may fail.

Painting, a long noviciate needs, to prove 25
Your patient zeal, and persevering love,
And him who proudly to her heart aspires,
Mature of age, in all his powers requires.

Sagacious now, while full before your eye,
The various paths of Art, alluring lie, 30
Observe to what attractive course inclined,
Your Genius leads, and seize the fav'ring wind.

Line 32. *Your Genius leads, and seize the fav'ring wind.*]
—The painter's studies hitherto, may be considered as general and preparatory : a kind of school-course, calculated to sharpen his faculties, and fit him for any exercise of his art. He has however, now arrived at the point from which the different tracks of Taste diverge ; and it will be necessary, to determine in which of them he is to pursue his journey. This second choice is not less important than the first, for the vague love of painting which has impelled him to take up the palette, will have only the more fatally misled him, if he employs it in a department to which his talents are unsuited : here nature and good sense only can be his guide. He *may* fail if he follows the impulse of inclination, but he *must* fail if he counteracts it. Whatever may be his provision for the journey, he will always travel farthest in the road which he likes best. But when he has chosen his course, he should persevere in it ; to fluctuate is fatal. Fickleness is the worst disease of mind

Whether endow'd with Eagle strength to spring,
 You soar aloft on bold Historic wing;
 Or, weaker pinion'd, take an humbler aim, 35
 To Portrait fly, and flatter into fame:
 Whether the pastoral of life delight,
 Or vulgar scenes in Dutch detail invite,

with which a painter can be afflicted: it denotes a weakness of intellectual stamina—a want of that patient vigour, which steadily pursues its object, undiverted by allurements or impediment. He who is always changing his route can never make much progress: he becomes fatigued without getting forward, and has often the mortification to find himself surpassed by inferior powers more judiciously and steadily directed.

Line 35. *Or, weaker pinion'd, take an humbler aim,*]—Although the Author certainly, had no intention to offend the feelings of any description of Artists, and can have no desire to degrade any department of Art from its just rank in the scale of public esteem, yet he understands, that he has been thought to speak irreverently of some pursuits of Taste, which take a different direction from that which it is the object of the present work to recommend. With those who entertain this opinion, he fears he has but little chance of making his peace in the present publication, for he cannot sacrifice principle to complaisance,

“Nor be so civil to be insincere.”

But though he would always pay a ready respect to rational

What'er your forte, to that your zeal confine,
Let all your efforts there concenter'd shine; 40
As shallow streams collected form a tide,
So talents thrive, to one grand point applied.

sensibility and a laudable desire of esteem,* he considers the feelings of irascible vanity and pettish self-importance, of no consequence, and entitled to no attention. He has no hope of satisfying those who have neither the spirit to perform, nor the virtue to revere, the higher achievements of genius; who sunk in hopeless insignificance, shew all the meanness without the ingenuity of a mechanic, and affect the pride without the powers of an Artist.

That casting weight pride adds to emptiness,
This who can gratify, for who can guess?

POPE.

Persons of this description have no interest in the advancement of the Art, except as it may concern themselves; they feel no desire for advantages of which they are conscious they cannot participate—for opportunities of which they know they are unable to avail themselves: they would willingly lower the standard of Taste to the level of their

* The Author crased from the third edition of Rhymes on Art, a passage, which a modest and very ingenious remonstrance from Mr. Watts, informed him, was considered as reflecting on the practice of miniature-painting.

A jealous mistress is the Muse of Art,
And scorns to share the homage of your heart,
Demands continual tribute to her charms, 45
And takes no truant suitor to her arms.

own pretensions, and assist with pleasure to pluck every feather from the wing of Genius, rather than see it soar beyond their reach.

All the subalterns of Taste, from the pompous painter of portraits (*horresco referens*) who manufactures faces with polygraphic facility, down to the decorator of a coach pannel, and the artificer of shades in a shop-window ; all, lay claim to the highest honours of Art, consider themselves as field-officers in the divisions of *Virtù*, and put forth all the quills of the porcupine, if you but hint that they occupy a subordinate station.

The Author cannot be supposed desirous to depreciate those humbler pursuits of the palette, upon one of which he himself depends, for whatever of honour or estimation he can hope to acquire in society ; but in urging the claims of painting, to the countenance and protection of the State, he has no hesitation to avow, that however highly he may respect the powers which they require and display, he considers portraits and landscapes, low life and still life, dead game and living game, fruits, flowers, or butterflies, as quite out of the question : he knows of no pretensions which they can have to any particular interference in their favour ; and he thinks their cultivation would be amply

Observe Hilario, who with merit fraught,
A universal Genius would be thought; [shine
Would snatch the crown from Creighton's brow, and
In all the various glories of the Nine. 50
In him the furor of ambition burns,
While ev'ry Art engrosses him by turns;
Till lust of praise destroys the power to please,
And emulation rages to disease.
Tho' rich in parts, a spendthrift of his powers, 55
He diligently dissipates his hours;
In studious trifling loiters life away,
And idles most laboriously his day;

provided for, in that general diffusion of taste and ability, which must always result from a liberal and enlightened patronage of Historic Art. They are all branches of the same tree, more or less remotely connected with the parent stock, from the flourishing state of which they cannot fail to derive sufficient vigour and luxuriance.

In these lower regions of Taste, all of which, though he has mentioned them together, the Author is far from considering as on the same level; there are wreaths to be acquired, which may justly satisfy an honourable ambition, without assuming a false consequence, or arrogantly demanding those distinctions which ought to be reserved as the incentive and reward of noble daring, in the lofty flights of Art.

In system shallow, in pretension pert,
 A dabbler on the surface of desert ! 60
 A frothy fop, in shreds of science drest,
 A superficial smatterer at best.

Say, have those sounds e'er touch'd your chosen ear,
 From heav'n that fall in holy murmurs here ?
 That voice divine ! heart-whispering, that reveals, 65
 To shun the mob that shout at Mammon's heels ;
 To quit the common hunt, for nobler game,
 And seek in purer paths a spotless fame ;
 Swells your fired breast as full in Fancy's glass,
 By Taste decreed, the Pencil's triumphs pass ? 70
 While Genius glows, ambitious to restore
 Her ancient honours to the Muse once more,
 O ! give the gen'rous impulse wing, nor fear
 To press still forward in the proud career ;

Line 73. *O ! give the generous impulse wing, nor fear*]—
 In urging the Student to cultivate the higher provinces of Art, the Author is not insensible of the existing impediments to such a direction of his talents. Amongst the multitude of English painters, if but few aspire to the Epic or Historic wreath, it is not that ambition and ability are wanting, but that unfavourable circumstances occasion the

To wrest, enraptured, as your powers expand, 75
The Hero's fame, from History's feeble hand ;
To call the Patriot forth, life-breathing, bold,
The passions sway, in scene sublime unfold ;

suppression of the one, and the misapplication of the other.

If they who so loudly complain of our exhibitions as deficient in subjects of an elevated character in Art, would but reflect a little, not only on the time and talent, but the materials and accommodations, which are necessary to produce such works, they would perhaps, be induced to lower the tone of their contempt, and transfer a portion of their indignation from the painter to the patron.

The Painter cannot, like the Poet, compose his subject in the street, and beg from the first shop, a sheet of paper to transcribe.* He depends more on time and place, and must wait for opportunity and patronage. Barry justly observes, that " Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Carache could not have produced their wonders, without the Sestini chapel, the Vatican, and the Farnese palace, but that Milton's Poem required neither a palace nor a prince."

A great work in Art cannot now be the production of indigence and obscurity, for it is the labour of years, pursued through many arduous studies, and assisted by a variety of

* Vide Johnson's Life of Savage.

A venal age, with Virtue's traits surprise,
And bid the awful shades of Glory rise. 80

What! tho' no wreaths in our dull days attend
On these high themes, nor fostering cares befriend;

models and materials—requiring a number of local and mechanical facilities, and attended consequently, with considerable expense. Who will sustain the powers of Genius through such a process? What are the tempting allurements to an exertion so arduous? the reasonable hopes of honour or emolument to justify so serious a speculation on the liberality of the day? The fate of those who have tried the public feeling, will not tend much to recommend the experiment.

Barry, ambitious of renown in his art, and hopeless of any opportunity more favourable to his purpose, proposed to adorn the great room of “the Society of Arts,” with a series of pictures, illustrative of the progress of man towards civilization and science. To complete this extensive work, he devoted himself to poverty and seclusion for seven or eight years; subsisting on means scarcely adequate to the support of nature in the humblest station; and by its exhibition to the public when finished, he obtained, as the whole reward of his labours,—five hundred pounds!!!

Nor did the affluence of honours compensate for the penury of profit: notwithstanding the zeal, the perseverance, and

Though bloated Wealth, Caprice, and Pride conspire,
To quench, in cold contempt, each Muse's fire;
Forsake the Patron's path, with Glory graced, 85
To truck and barter in the trade of Taste ;

the ability which he displayed, the modern Polygnotus* did not receive the thanks of his country ; he had no honourable residence assigned to him in the different cities of the empire ; he found it difficult to live, even on the humblest scale of expense, in that city which his genius has so much contributed to adorn, and died at last the object of a public subscription.

It is impossible for Candour to contemplate without strong feelings of admiration, the ardour and enthusiasm of this extraordinary man ; who disdaining the mercenary maxims of the world—breaking from the allurements of pleasure, and the delusions of vanity, could sacrifice every object of vulgar ambition to the honourable pursuit of Fame. It is impossible to view him, in the face of every evil that could shake a mind less firm, prosecuting his work, as the great ornament of modern literature has pathetically described

* Polygnotus having painted the Pœcile, a famous portico at Athens, refused to take payment for his work ; and as an acknowledgment of his genius and generosity, the Amphictyons returned him solemn thanks, and assigned him an honourable residence, at the public expense, in all the cities of Greece.

What ! tho' proscribed—unpurpled, we deplore
The moral majesty of Art—no more,
While vulgar toils the Pencil's powers deprave,
And not a garland blooms e'en o'er the grave. 90

himself on a somewhat similar occasion, "amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow," without emotions of the highest respect for an ambition so exalted, an intrepidity so rare, and a spirit so independant ; without sentiments of unavailing regret, that errors of eccentricity on his part, should have diminished the impression of his merits ; and that errors of apathy on the part of the public, should have obstructed their full display, and prevented their just remuneration.

The merits and the manners of Barry, were certainly little suited to the time, and still less to the country in which he lived. As a man, he would have been more distinguished in the age of Pericles ; as a painter, he would have been more esteemed in the age of Leo ; in Greece he might perhaps, have been a sage, as well as an artist ; the leader of a sect in philosophy, and the founder of a school of Taste. In England, he was only an oddity at whom every body stared, whom few appreciated, and fewer still understood.

In his art and in his manners, he alike mistook, or rather disregarded, what was essential to his time : in the former, he followed the Roman School, when only the Venetian was admired ; in the latter, he neglected urbanity, when urbanity was necessary to please, and allowed himself to be

Yet not unmindful of your zeal, the Muse
Shall still some comforts in your cup infuse ;
Shall drop the balm that soothes th' indignant breast ;
When sordid cares th' aspiring mind molest ;

rough and independant amongst those, who always demand our respect, and often our obsequiousness. He was an injudicious trader, whose commodities, though good in their kind, were brought to the wrong market ; and though he found out his error, he disdained to change his cargo, or conform to the prejudices of those, whom he thought it his duty to direct, and his privilege to supply.

But whatever may have been the defects of his personal character, his professional views seem to have been liberal and dignified ; consistent with his principles, and his practice ; directed to the advancement of his art and the glory of his country. If his ardour was inconsiderate or intemperate, it was apparently disinterested : if he was violent and impracticable with his brethren, it was in the honest pursuit of public objects ; objects, which all must admit to have been worthy of his zeal, however they may disapprove of the indiscretion which rendered it unsociable and abortive.

Neglect, mortification, and disappointment, wrought on Barry their usual effects in irritable and ambitious minds : he withdrew from the contest, not defeated, but disgusted : he sunk into himself with an indignant feeling of worth

Shall pour the pride, that, in life's humblest state, 93
Bears the wrong'd spirit buoyant o'er its fate ;
Repels the shafts by adverse fortune hurl'd,
And braves the blackest aspect of the world.

unregarded : a proud consciousness of having meant well and merited better of his country.

A prey to moody meditation, and averse from common intercourse, he became every day more unsocial in his habits, morose in his temper, and suspicious in his imagination. Like Rousseau, he fancied himself the object of a general conspiracy—the common mark for all the arrows of envy, malevolence, and injustice. Every untoward circumstance of his life, from the most trifling domestic molestation, to the most serious difficulties and disasters, he ascribed to the unceasing machinations of a cabal, formed for his destruction, and combining all the means of mischief in a course of unrelenting persecution.

That the intractable coarseness of his manners, the open and too often outrageous contempt which he expressed for the busy, imbecile intriguers of his profession, should have made him enemies amongst them is more than probable. The sly, and selfish tribe, who speculate on public Institutions, and whose only skill consists in the dexterity with which they can extract from them the means of private advantage, and personal influence ; who, measuring all men by their own standard, consider disinterested characters only as wholesale hypocrites, and public spirit as imposture, will always

Nor envy those who bask in Fortune's ray,
The Portrait panegyrists of their day : 100
Tho' Fashion's fiat stamp their toils divine,
And Loves and Graces sport in every line ;

view with mortal aversion those, from whose probity and independance, they can hope neither for connivance nor co-operation. But the unremitting and systematic malignity of which he considered himself the victim ; the various spells which the necromancy of mischief was hourly casting around him, were the unhappy delusions of an imagination irritated by brooding over real ills and fancied enmities. The general proscription however, in which his undistinguishing resentment involved all that is respectable in his profession, can be palliated or pardoned, only in consideration of that mental malady, which unprincipled opposition first produced, and continued disappointment subsequently exasperated.

That the manners and habits of a man who differed so much from the society in which he lived, should, by some, be considered as a cunning device, to fix upon him the public attention, is not extraordinary, in an age, when quackery has become so prolific in expedients of attraction. Barry however, seems not to have merited this imputation. Eccentricity is sometimes a natural defect of Genius, but it is always a vice of affectation in those who are pretenders to that quality : it is a flaw that may be occasionally found in the sterling coin, but it is an artificial mark

Tho' beaux and beauties own enraptured there,
A mien more gallant, and a face more fair,

impressed upon the counterfeit. They who affect singularity are however easily discovered ; there is a method in their madness which always proves it to be assumed. He who can repress his whims to suit his interests ; whose peculiarities know how to respect season and circumstance, person and place, wears his eccentricity as a mask, and should be treated with contempt as an imposter. But the singularities of Barry were not of this character, they were too intractable for policy, and too lasting for affectation. Those marks must be deep, which neither interest nor time can obscure or obliterate. If it was a mask which he put on, it appears never to have been taken off ; if he acted a part, he was at least consistent, and observed the Horatian maxim "*servetur ad imum, &c.*"

Whatever we may think of his sense, or his discretion, we must at least give him credit for sincerity, who persists in his oddities at the expense of his interests ; who is perverse only to his own prejudice ; and sacrifices to the indulgence of caprice, all the ordinary hopes and pleasures of society.

An affectation pursued to such serious consequences, the poet has justly, though ludicrously characterised in the following couplet :

Who hangs himself, or beats his brains,
The devil's in him if he feigns.

With posterity, Barry will find more favour than he expe-

Yet teizing follies torture all their hours, 105
Disturb their studies, and impede their powers ;
Pretending critics round their eazel stand,
And fops and ladies dictate to their hand.

rienced from his contemporaries. His character will brighten in proportion as time shall remove those stains of personal peculiarity which so much disfigured and obscured it. They who shall see him only in his works, will regard him as a man of genius and virtue, neglected and undervalued in his time ; as a painter, who sought to revive the best æra of Taste, and aspired to soar upon the noblest pinion of his Art ; as a patriot, who ably vindicated the insulted character of his country, and endeavoured to rouse the spirit of a mercenary age, to a juster estimation and more liberal culture of those studies upon her proficiency in which must depend, whether Britain shall be hereafter regarded as the boast or the Bœotia of the modern world.

Line 105. *Yet teizing follies torture all their hours,*]—To paint a good portrait requires a degree of ability, which the public in general do not adequately appreciate. It is one of the most difficult operations of Art, performed under the most unfavourable circumstances ; and if we except the superior departments of history, it yields to no production of the pencil in skill, interest, or dignity.

All Artists are more or less embarrassed, by the injudicious interference of their employers, but the portrait

Intent on higher toils, now turn the eye,
Selective o'er what ages past supply ; 110
Since first the beam of Taste pervading cheer'd
The Vandal gloom, and Arts once more appear'd ;

painter may be said to be a martyr to the whims and frivolities of those on whom he depends. He has not only to encounter the difficulties of his art, but the caprices of his subject ; and can neither consult his fancy nor command his time. His ardour is disappointed perhaps, when excited to the highest pitch of exertion ; or his pencil is arrested at the moment when it has begun to flow with facility and effect. While studying intensely he is required to converse with ease, and discuss the topics of the day while he thinks of rivalling Reynolds and Vandyke. In short, he must unite to the skill of the painter, the ingenuity of the politician, and negotiate constantly between ignorance and science : he must extricate himself dextrously from the devices of Vanity—reconcile to common sense and propriety, the conceptions of folly, and reduce the monstrosities of fashion to symmetry and grace.

Nothing can be more injudicious, or ineffectual to any good purpose, than an interference with the painter in the execution of his work. Good Taste will select the Artist who appears the best qualified, and good sense will leave him to his own discretion. He is the best acquainted with his own powers, as well as the powers of his art : he knows where his strength lies, and how he can employ it with

As when excursive o'er the fields of air,
The strongest sight restricted travels there,
Till by the magic tube's sky-piercing aid, 115
The heavens are measured, and the stars display'd ;

most advantage ; his reputation depends upon his success, and if he is left to the direction of his own judgment, the disgrace of failure is without palliation or excuse.

The painter must have studied his profession to little purpose, if he has not more taste than those who usually employ him. To dictate to him therefore, is to forego the benefit of his superior knowledge, and to substitute the errors of ignorance and inexperience, for the results of skill and judgment.

The pride of Genius revolts from an interposition so inconsiderate and absurd ; he feels that you doubt his talents the moment you attempt to direct them : you chill that enthusiastic ardour which always attends the execution of his own conceptions, and by disturbing the free exercise of his powers, at once frustrate and offend them.

Whatever the connoisseur and the man of taste may think of their influence in this way, common sense and experience, will doubt, if any production of Art has ever been improved, on the whole, by their interference ; dullness cannot be raised upon their stilts, and Genius stands above them : the spirit is not strong which their efforts are required to rectify.

Gibbon says, he soon gave up the "modest practice" of

The Painter thus, a bounded prospect views,
 And clouds in error his contracted Muse,
 Till previous toils their optick aids impart,
 And shew him Nature through the eyes of Art : 120
 Swift-spreading round, th' enlarged horizon flies,
 As Taste discover'd scenes encircling rise :
 Art springs, exalted, from an height sublime,
 And soars upon the strengthen'd wing of Time.

By cautious steps the mind progressive moves, 125
 As on the past, the present still improves ;

reading his works to his friends. He who cannot proceed without such assistance, will not be carried far on the road of reputation, and would do well to turn aside from the career of Taste.

Premature criticism frequently disconcerts the character and consistency of the whole work, by directing our attention to a fastidious consideration of the parts ; it checks our confidence in ourselves, at the moment when to doubt of our powers, is to disable them ; it often stifles the birth of a beauty in the officious anticipation of a defect, and operates only to emasculate what it affects to amend.

Line 125. *By cautious steps the mind progressive moves,*]
 —It is obvious, that if we do not make ourselves acquainted with the labours of those who have preceded us in the path

To Science, hoary Time submissive bows,
To write her progress on his wrinkled brows ;
Full, on his hieroglyphic front appears,
The rich result of long revolving years, 180

which we have chosen, we must suffer under great disadvantages, and be subject to spend much time and toil, in a tedious contention with those primary obstructions of our course, which a little communication with former travellers would have enabled us at once to avoid or remove.

The painter in particular, should eagerly seize every opportunity, of seeing what has been done by those who have excelled in his profession ; he who is not conversant with the productions of the great masters, can form no adequate conception of the powers of his art ; until he mounts the mighty wave of science as it rolls, he can have no idea how far he may be carried forward beyond the struggles of his unassisted strength.

We must take care however, that in the contemplation of what has been done, we do not forget that there is something more to do ; or allow ourselves to be diverted from the object of our journey, by the directors of our road. We must preserve our veneration for Nature, in the midst of our admiration of Art, and never so far give our confidence to her imitators, as to suffer them to take her place in our affections. Her picture, after all, is the picture which we are required to paint, and we must be familiar with her noblest features, before we can judge if others have done

Whatever Toil has taught, or Taste inspired,
Or Genius in the field of fame acquired :
Who read this crowded record of the past—
This page, where all the wealth of Wit's amass'd,
With wonder grasp the gather'd stores of mind, 135
And wield the whole experience of mankind.

them justice, or know how we are to represent them ourselves.

A painter therefore, while studying the works of other Artists, will always find it useful, to have some production of his own going forward at the same time ; it will oblige him to keep in his eye the model of all models ; he will have the advantage of a double comparison ; and while, on the one hand, his selection of Nature will be assisted by the refinement of Science ; so, on the other, his admiration of Art will be chastened by the simplicity of Nature.

He will thus observe with more attention, and ascertain with more accuracy, what it is, that great minds communicate to their productions, to give them an interest so much beyond the attainment of ordinary powers ; he will better estimate the materials with which they build, and the skill displayed in their arrangement : he will detect the charm which Genius employs ; the spell which he casts around him in all his operations, and soon learn to distinguish what offers itself on the surface of ingenuity, from that which must be sought in the sensibilities of Taste, or pursued in the recesses of Science.

Seek then, assiduous, to refine, and raise
Your powers of Art by those of ancient days;
Observe what tracts have been explored around,
What regions traversed, and what treasures found;

Line 138. *Your powers of Art by those of ancient days ;*]
—It has been said, that “we should rather read much, than many books.” The observation may be applied to Art ; for it is better to study a few good pictures with attention, than to pass superficially over a great number. The improvement to be derived from an opportunity of visiting large collections, is often impeded by the difficulty of fixing the attention sufficiently to one object ; the face of an individual makes but little impression in a crowd, and we must not look at every thing if we desire to see one thing well.

The extraordinary assemblage of works of Art deposited in the Louvre at Paris, appears in this respect, on the first view, quite embarrassing. All is confusion and astonishment : the eye is dazzled and bewildered, wandering from side to side—from picture to picture ; like a glutton at a feast, anxious to devour every thing, till the intellectual stomach palled and oppressed by variety, loses the pleasure of taste, and the power of digestion.

The Author experienced this effect so strongly during his first visits to this immense collection, that if he had not had the opportunity of a longer and more systematic examination, his mind would have retained nothing of the mass

Those bold adventurers, long revered, and placed 141
By Time, triumphant at the helm of Taste,
Pursue where'er the flag of Fame's unfurl'd,
And sail with Genius round the graphic world.

of excellence there displayed, but a chaos of confused forms and erroneous impressions.

There is an art in making use of pictures, as well as in painting them ; we must not only learn to distinguish such works as are proper for our study, but also, such parts of them, as may deserve to be studied. The best masters have faults, as well as beauties ; and we should take warning by the one, while we take example by the other. Raphael is no more to be studied for *chiaro 'scuro*, than Rembrandt for beauty and grace ; Correggio is as defective in purity of design, as Poussin in harmony of colouring ; and we shall find as little simplicity in the splendours of Rubens, as propriety in the compositions of Paul Veronese.

We must endeavour to preserve a degree of freedom even in our devotion, to follow our models with respect, but not with servility, and while we derive from them the benefit of instruction, avoid the danger of imitation.

It is because the Student is not sufficiently impressed with the necessity of this rule, that he in general derives so little advantage from the contemplation of great works : he admires without discrimination, and imitates without choice ; he reaps the cockle with the corn, and finds the harvest not worth the carriage.

Though purest forms from ancient Greece we trace,
And in her Sculpture find the school of grace, 146
No trophies of her Pencil's power remain,
To prove in picture her coequal reign ;
Else might the Muse her graphic triumphs own,
And vanquish'd Raphael abdicate the throne; 150

Line 150. *And vanquish'd Raphael abdicate the throne;]*—
The world of Taste has been much divided on this subject. Whether the Greek painters were, or were not on a level with their Sculptors ; and if a Parrhásius, a Protogenes, and an Apelles, should be considered as having attained to greater excellence than a Raphael, a Titian, and a Correggio, are questions which have occasioned much discussion, and “adhuc sub judice lis est.”

It seems indeed, not easy to conceive how the controversy can ever be satisfactorily decided, since the materials of judgment are wanting ; time has removed out of court the most essential witnesses, and we have nothing better to proceed upon, than circumstantial evidence. It must be confessed however, that this species of proof is strong in favour of the ancients, and although, not conclusive according to the laws of criticism, it must have considerable influence upon a jury of Taste.

The Author does not pretend, in the glimmering of a note, to throw much light on a subject, to which the illumination of so many volumes has been devoted in vain ; he would wish merely, to account for the opinion stated in

But now no more Campaspe's graces prove
Apelles' skill, and justify his love ;
No more display'd in Helen's form divine,
By Zeuxis hand assembled beauties shine ;
Nor longer his protective genius glows, 155
Who turn'd the fury of his country's foes,

the text, by touching on a few of those topics which have tended to produce it.

The principal arguments which have been commonly applied to this subject, may be classed under three heads. Direct evidence, drawn from the remains of ancient painting which have descended to us ; testimony, derived from the writings of ancient critics and authors ; and analogy, drawn from an observation of the usual progress of painting and sculpture in modern times. The first species of proof is, unfortunately for the advocates of antiquity, by no means favourable to their side of the question ; they who affect to discover in the few examples of the Grecian pencil, which time has spared for our examination, sufficient evidence of the superior excellence to which the ancient painters had attained, display their prejudice, rather than their knowledge, and should be listened to with suspicion, as partial, or incompetent judges. Independent of the merits of design, which have been ascribed to them, these works are acknowledged by artists to possess no one quality of a fine picture : they discover many of those defects which are found to

When Rhodes, rejoicing in her rescued towers,
Beheld her best palladium in his powers.*

characterise an early stage of the Graphic Art ; and display no proficiency in the knowledge of composition, colouring, and light and shade.

Their effect on the question is but little strengthened by representing them as the performance of inferior artists. The general mass of ingenuity in a nation, is more or less influenced by the state of knowledge, and the degree of excellence to which Arts have there attained : the rays of Genius, like those of the sun, pervade all parts of the intellectual atmosphere, and ripen into comparative perfection, the remotest fruits of the human faculties. The meanest performances will betray some trace of those principles, which regulate and recommend the more scientific productions of the same period. The wildest tracts of Taste will discover some footsteps, from which you may infer the general state of the country. There is scarcely a sign, or a tea-tray painted at present in England, which does not indicate some faint reflection from the radiance of a Reynolds. If we apply these observations therefore to the question before us, we shall draw no conclusion favourable to the

* Pliny relates, that King Demetrius forbore to set fire to the city of Rhodes, lest he should destroy the picture of Jalyſus, painted by Protogenes. Book 35. c. 10.

Old Time, still partial to Ausonia's claim,
Suppress'd those ancient rivals of her Fame, 160
Firm on her brows the wreath of painting placed,
And what she lost in empire, gave in Taste.

state of painting amongst the Greeks, from those specimens of their skill, upon which so much stress has been laid by injudicious advocates.

The second argument, derived from the testimony of ancient critics and historians, is, as far as their authority can be admitted, entirely in favour of the ancients. The same authors who extol their sculpture, speak of their painting with equal praise; the admirers of Phidias, Praxiteles, and Agesander, are the panegyrists of Timanthes, Protogenes, and Apelles; and we owe some little respect to their commendations in the one case, since we have found them to be so just with regard to the other. A French writer on this subject, who styles himself "Le Citoyen Ponce," has certainly laboured not unsuccessfully, to invalidate the testimony of Cicero and Pliny in this cause; the inconsistencies of the latter are indeed too evident to require much ingenuity for their detection; and however the Arts may be indebted to him as their historian and panegyrist, his authority as a critic, it is to be feared, must, as a post untenable, be given up to Citizen Ponce, and his precursor Falconet.

But notwithstanding the confused and contradictory manner in which Pliny reports the opinions of his prede-

Behold, sublimed to those high spheres of Art,
Where Fancy sways, and Passion strikes the heart ;

cessors, we can collect enough from him to be convinced, that the ancient painters were considered on a par with their Sculptors ; and it seems scarcely credible that those who could understand and applaud the highest excellence of Art displayed in the statues of the ancients, should not have required in their pictures a corresponding perfection, nor have been conscious of that relative inferiority which has been supposed, and which must have consisted in defects so obvious and intelligible to ordinary observation.

Painting, as a closer imitation of Nature, and presenting more points of comparison with its model, is more subject to criticism than sculpture, and less likely to be undeservedly commended. He that may be easily deceived in the superior beauties of form, character, and expression, will be struck by imperfections in composition, colouring and effect, because they are qualities of Art concerning which, a critical knowledge is more easily obtained. Experience proves, that a bad statue will pass with *éclat*, where a bad picture finds no mercy. *Cæteris paribus*, therefore, the Painter will be less praised than the Sculptor, in proportion as the powers of his art are more general, and more within the cognisance of his critics.

Could we conceive a degree of excellence in imitative art superior to that which has been displayed by the sculpture of the Greeks, from the commendations which

Where Taste and Truth according functions fill, 165
And moral dignifies mimetic skill,

they have bestowed upon the productions of their painters, we might be justified in supposing that they had attained to it.

The third argument, founded on our experience of the relative progress of the two Arts amongst the moderns, appears to be equally in favour of the ancients.

If no vestige of the Grecian pencil had remained to our days; if all the observations on the subject, which the repositories of literature have preserved to us, had been swallowed up in the gulph of time, together with the celebrated works of which they treat; were there no other lights to guide a conjecture, than those which shine forth in the unrivalled examples of their sculpture, what judgment should we have formed of the state of painting amongst the Greeks, at a period, when the sister art soared to such perfection? We should have found it difficult to believe, from any deduction of experience or analogy, that their pencil did not keep pace with their chissel; or that the sensibility of Taste and Genius which led them to such exalted excellence in the one art, did not conduct them to equal refinement in all those qualities which constitute the perfection of the other.

Amongst the moderns, the two arts, like twins, have advanced together to maturity. Whatever difference in vigour they may have displayed, must perhaps be considered to

Rome's graphic sons superior palms demand,
And climes consenting crown the immortal band.

appear in favour of painting, although deprived of the advantage of ancient models in her peculiar department. The experience of latter ages certainly, affords no instance, in which sculpture has flourished in any conspicuous degree of excellence, where painting had not arrived to equal, if not greater luxuriance.

The French writer before mentioned, thinks it reasonable to conclude, that as Flanders and Holland have produced great Painters without great Sculptors; so, the period of Phidias and Praxiteles, may have been distinguished by great Sculptors, without great Painters. The inference does not appear to be either logical or illustrative. The example of those countries proves that painting may flourish where her sister art has made no progress, but we have had no instance in modern times of the reverse of this position.

Every argument that the considerations of experience or analogy can supply, seems arranged on the side of those who believe, that the painters of antiquity did not suffer themselves to be distanced in the race of honourable fame; that the fire of Genius could not have been kindled to such a blaze in the one art, without communicating the flame to the other, upon which it is in a great measure dependant; and that if the works of Timanthes, Protogenes, and Apelles, were now existing, they would be found

Swift as the comet cleaves th' etherial way,
As bright his lustre, and as brief his day, 170
Urbino rising to the raptured eye,
Appear'd, and blazed, and vanish'd from the sky.

consistent with their reputation, and commensurate to the powers of their more fortunate contemporaries.

A variety of other considerations, naturally arising out of the view of the question here taken, might be brought forward in support of the Author's general reasoning, did he not fear to stretch his note to the length of an Essay. Perhaps, it will be thought that he has already treated too diffusely a topic, upon which opinion may be allowed the utmost latitude, without the apprehension of danger from indecision, or the hope of conviction from dispute.

Line 167. *Rome's graphic sons superior palms demand,*]—The Author has not considered it necessary, to give a methodical account of the different schools of Art, or a particular enumeration of those Artists by whom they were established, or supported. He has touched upon the characters of a few only of their most conspicuous ornaments, following no other arrangement than that which he conceives to be the order of Merit, and the precedence of reputation.

The pre-eminent claims of the Roman School, in which the Florentine may be included, have been long and generally acknowledged. They have soared the highest flight of Taste, and plucked their laurels from the proudest eleva-

Monarch of Art! in whose august domains,
Colleagued with Genius, soundest Judgment reigns;
Simplicity prevails without pretence, 175
And Fancy sports within the bounds of Sense.

tion of historic and poetic Art. While the merits of the head are to be preferred to those of the hand; while the mental, can be distinguished from the mechanical, their superiority must remain unshaken, and their honours unimpaired. We have long admired their altitude, at an humble distance, without a hope of rivalry, or even a desire of imitation.

However indignantly we may defend from aspersion the qualities of our atmospheric air, it must be acknowledged, that the air of Taste amongst us, has not been hitherto sufficiently purified for the expansion of the historic wing. Yet some of our nobler birds have sprung from the perch, and sustained by their own vigour, led the way to regions, where it is to be hoped, that the rising gales of patronage, will shortly enable the whole brood to follow with safety and success.

Line 173. *Monarch of Art! in whose august domains,*]—
If their devotion to the higher qualities of Art gives to the Roman School a just claim of distinction above the other Schools of Italy; the attainment of these qualities in the highest perfection, must give to Raphael a just claim to be considered superior to the other painters of that School.

His merits are amongst the most elevated and essential—
his defects amongst the most pardonable and unimportant.

By Nature's hand with liberal bounty graced,
And proudly fashion'd for the throne of Taste,
Before his age he sprang to painting's prime,
And forced his tardy fruits from ripening Time. 180

He is strong wherever strength is necessary, and weak only where weakness may be excused : master of all that distinguishes the Poet and the Painter, from the mechanics of the pencil and pen, his dignity can dispense with those humbler graces which are required to recommend inferior pretensions. What he sought he obtained, and he sought that which is most worthy of attainment. With powers to raise the mighty pillar of his art, he left it to others to decorate the pedestal, and sport around its base.

In his works we find the strongest indication of sound judgment, united to the purest examples of good taste. He never suffers himself to be seduced from simplicity to ostentation—never strides beyond the pace of propriety, or swells beyond the measure of proportion. His inventions without being obvious, or familiar, are natural and probable; neither straining after the eccentric, nor rejecting the uncommon; if they have been in some instances, inappropriate, it is not so much to be ascribed to him, as to the taste of the age in which he lived, and to the character of those by whom he was employed.

The composition of Raphael may perhaps be considered the highest feather of his plume, for there he displays all the skill of arrangement without the appearance of artifice, and

'Twas his, to choose the nobler end of Art,
And charm the eye, subservient to the heart ;
To strike the chords of sentiment—to trace
The form of dignity—the flow of grace ;

produces the grace of variety without the affectation of contrast. He resorts to no scholastic pedantries of Taste—makes use of no mechanical substitutes for skill—introduces no supplementary figures, in theatrical attitudes, to fill up space : as the actors express themselves, his drama exhibits no walking gentlemen, without business in the scene, or interest in the plot. All is plain and unpretending : his simplicity without insipidity : his grandeur without inflation.

His groupes are not constructed according to mechanical system, or academical receipt. No painter ever caught like him the careless ease of natural action, or knew how to cover with the semblance of happy accident the most studied arrangements of science.

The Cartoon of Christ giving the keys to Peter, affords an apposite illustration of Raphael's peculiar excellence in this way. The art of composition was perhaps never employed with more propriety, or concealed with more success. It is only when we endeavour to imagine a better disposition of the subject, that we become sensible of the skill which he has used, or that we can fully appreciate the judicious simplicity of the arrangement which he has adopted. Every figure falls into its place as if by chance,

The Passions protean empire to control, 185
And wield Expression's sceptre o'er the soul.
Whate'er of life he touch'd, of youth or age,
The pious Saint, or philosophic Sage ;

and yet occupies the precise situation which the most studied attention would have suggested ; while all the qualities of the subject, in action, character, and expression, are preserved without an indication of effort, or a trace of pre-concertion or design.

As the peculiar character and ambition of his art led him to address the mind in preference to the eye, the picturesque is in him always subordinate to the appropriate, and he disdains to cripple his subject in the consideration of lines and shapes. Like a judicious dramatist, he never sacrifices sentiment to situation, nor violates his story for stage effect.

But amongst all the qualities of Raphael, there is perhaps, none more striking and uncommon than that noble and unaffected simplicity, with which he covers himself from the spectator of his works. Of all the actors of the graphic stage, he may be said to be most completely absorbed in his part : you never catch him in a strut of importance, or an artifice of affectation : he lays no little schemes of popular attraction ; no clap-traps for applause. He is the dignified chieftain of his art, who conscious that his strength will appear in the exploits which he performs,

Whether, impressive in the bold design,
 The rapt Apostle pour the word divine ; 190
 Or bright, on Tabor's summit, to the skies,
 The God, in full transfigured glory, rise ;
 What'er the cast of character, his hand
 Has all the moulds of Genius at command,
 To Nature true, can each strong trait impart, 195
 And stamp with Taste the sterling ore of Art.

Next Buonaroti, rich in rival fame,
 To crown whose brows, three Arts contending claim ;

never parades his powers before us, nor concerts a single manœuvre for shew.

Though deficient generally as a colourist, he seems to have neglected that branch of the art rather than to have failed in it. Several of his easel pictures bear evidence of an eye sufficiently sensible to the beauties of colouring ; and from some parts of the Transfiguration we are warranted in concluding, that if he had lived longer, he would have endeavoured, not unsuccessfully, to have added the Venetian laurel to his brow.

Line 197. *Next Buonaroti, rich in rival fame,*] — In assigning to Raphael the highest place as a painter, the Author is sensible that he dissents from authorities for which he is bound to entertain the greatest respect. The Discourses of the late President of the Royal Academy,

Majestic Genius ! from whose daring hand
Springs all that's great in thought, or action grand,
What'er can awe the soul on sacred plan, 201
Or strike stupendous in the powers of man :

and Lectures of an eminent Professor (Mr. Fuzeli), appear to have effected a revolution in favour of Michael Angelo, and to have invested him with that supreme dignity in the empire of Art, which Raphael had so long enjoyed. Supplied from these powerful sources, a current of criticism has run of late in favour of the former, which the Author is by no means so vain as to suppose himself qualified to resist. In the scale against such authorities, he neither expects nor desires that his opinions should have any weight ; but as he cannot give them up without conviction, he hopes he may avow them without arrogance.*

The productions of Michael Angelo exhibit in a pre-

* It is but proper to state here, that the Author has not had an opportunity of seeing the great works of Michael Angelo in the Sistini Chapel. His opinions of this extraordinary man therefore, are made up from such materials as casts, copies, and prints from his productions supply ; together with an observation of such pictures as are *said* to have been executed by him, or after his designs. A tolerably just estimate however, may by those means be formed of his merits, for the qualities of his art are such as those reflectors of the pencil are most competent to display. Of

In forms emaciate cramp'd, before his day,
The meagre muscle scarce appear'd to play,
The story's strength, the enervate action marr'd, 205
Man seem'd a sapless statue, stiff, and hard,

eminent degree, those qualities of Art which are the most specious and imposing, as well as the most vigorous and impressive. He is ever occupied with the extraordinary, the majestic, and the sublime—ever touching the extremes of action and character—rushing into regions of imagination, where gigantic conceptions have room for growth, and the wild and terrific may be said to be at home—*gaudet monstris mentisque tumultu*.

The accomplished critics before mentioned, have shewn

this, there cannot perhaps, be a better proof, than that the learned and eloquent Professor Fuzeli, who must be supposed well acquainted with the treasures of the Sistini Chapel, has nevertheless chosen the Cartoon of Pisa, which exists only in such frail memorials, as one of the works from which he most particularly illustrates and exemplifies the merits of Michael Angelo.

The beauties of colouring and execution, are not to be transferred from the canvas by any imitative process of this kind; but the qualities of invention, composition, and design, may be perfectly well preserved in a print, and sometimes, through that medium, find not only a faithful, but a flattering likeness.

But torpid while the plastic lumber lay,
Prometheus like, he fired the lifeless clay,
Bade every limb enlarge—each breast expand,
And pour'd a race of giants from his hand. 210

themselves eminently qualified to explain and appreciate his powers: the grounds of their preference therefore, demand to be considered with cautious attention, and disputed with a very apprehensive dissent. The Author must confess however, that he has not quite so much deference for the crowd that follow in their track. The majority of those who give tongue so loudly in the present full cry of Michael Angelo, can scarcely be considered as having a scent of the game: they are the mere yelpers of the critical pack, and always the more loud in proportion as they are less sagacious: they see his sublimity only in his extravagance: they estimate his fire only by his smoke.

A true relish of the sublime, is one of the rarest qualities of good Taste; like all rare things therefore, it is much in demand: to be thought to possess it, is the great ambition of criticism, and as few are furnished with the sterling coin, vanity delights to jingle the counterfeit. We are easily induced to embrace opinions which it is fashionable to profess; the idle, the vain, and the servile, are always ready converts when they can approve with safety what they cannot oppose without risk. They who have less judgment than affectation, delight to shelter under a great name, and loudly proclaim their raptures, when admiration is sup-

Behold him, still as Genius prompts, impart
A bolder grace to each subservient Art,
While now the powers of Phidias he displays,
Now leaves Palladio but the second praise,

posed to imply the purest refinement of feeling, and the proudest elevation of Taste.

The Author is aware, that there is some danger in dissenting from so formidable a sect ; he knows, that there is no salvation out of the pale of their church : all those who do not acquiesce in their sentiments are damned at once, as deficient in that refined sensibility of Taste, which is the saving grace of their doctrine. This, it must be acknowledged, is a mode of settling the point, as flattering to their feelings as it is convenient to their arguments ; they at once quit the open plain of reason and common sense, and take a position above the level of investigation, which, as their opponents cannot approach, they need not be at the trouble to defend.

It must not however be supposed, that in exalting the genius of Raphael, the Author desires to depreciate that of Michael Angelo : he should be sorry to contradict in his notes, the admiration of his character which he has endeavoured to express in his text : it is as a painter only, that he presumes to assign to him the second place, and considers Raphael as entitled to precedence. An opinion, perfectly consistent with a just impression of his general excellence, and in defence of which, no trifling support

Whether he rears the Prophet's form on high, 215
Or hangs the dome enormous in the sky,
On painting's proudest pinion soars sublime,
Scales heav'n itself, and scorns the bounds of Time;

may be derived from the (perhaps inadvertent) admissions of some who appear to have maintained an opposite sentiment.

Reynolds, in his Fifth Discourse, acknowledges, "that our judgment must *on the whole*, decide in favour of Raphael." In his Twelfth, he calls him "the first of painters."

Of all the qualities of Art, the sublime is that which appears to be the most vague, irregular and undefined; scarcely two writers are agreed as to its properties or powers: for instruction, they give us declamation—for settled Principles, they produce disputable examples. It may be said to be in some measure, the intoxicating spirit of Taste—the insane point of the critical compass; for those who talk rationally on other subjects, no sooner touch on this, than they go off in a literary delirium; fancy themselves, like Longinus, "the great sublime they draw," and rave like methodists, of inward lights, and enthusiastic emotions, which, if you cannot comprehend, you are set down as un-illuminated by the grace of criticism, and excluded from the elect of Taste.

In painting, and in poetry, critics seem to be equally unsettled and unsatisfactory on the subject of the sublime.

Thro' all his toils, triumphant vigour swells,
And grandeur in impressive glory dwells. 220
His fiery soul beyond this sphere of things,
To man's more awful scene hereafter springs ;

The celebrated passage of Genesis, quoted by Longinus, "Let there be light, and there was light," has been denied to possess this quality by eminent authorities.* Reynolds says, that he has seen figures of Michael Angelo, of which it was difficult to determine, whether they were in the "*highest degree sublime*," or in the "*greatest degree ridiculous*."

Who shall walk in safety on this brink? whose Taste shall hope to be fixed, where the pendulum of Reynolds shakes with so tremendous a vibration? But we must ever fluctuate in opinion, when we have no standard in principle; when we make fallacious, and often affected feeling the measure of our admiration, and deliver up the reins of our understanding to chimera and caprice. The bounds of Nature and good Sense once passed, we must be content to wander amongst precipices, without a guide; exposed to mistake extravagance for grandeur, and to fall into the burlesque when we would soar into the sublime.

The works of Michael Angelo, are acknowledged to

* Two eminent French critics particularly, have disputed the sublimity of this expression: M. Le Clerc and M. Huet, the learned Bishop of Avranches.

With fearless hand unfolds the final state,
That closes the catastrophe of Fate ;
Displays the pangs of guilt to vengeance hurl'd, 225
While heav'n's just sentenceshakes the shudd'ring world.

possess in a greater degree, than those of any other painter, that quality, which is generally considered the sublime. The character of Art which this term expresses, may be said to have, in modern times, originated with him ; and in his hands it attained to a degree of power and impression, which his successors have not been able to improve. Sometimes indeed, his gesture is exaggerated to distortion, and his grandeur totters on the verge of extravagance : but he who takes a great leap cannot always measure the exertion required, and vigour will rather exceed than fall short of his distance. Yet, allowing Buonaroti to be superior in this great quality, it will require to be proved, that this single advantage is sufficient, to turn the scale of comparison against the many other important parts of the art, in which he has been surpassed by Raphael. If the star of grandeur shines with a fiercer blaze over the head of Michael Angelo, it is surpassed by the collective light of that constellation of merits which forms the glory of his rival.

But if in dignity and elevation of style, the former be conspicuous, the latter certainly cannot be said to be defective. If greatness be the commanding characteristic of the one, it is also a striking quality of the other. In Buonaroti it is a torrent that swells into floods, tumbles in

But lo ! from climes less genial, where the Muse,
With pride her Belgic trophies still reviews ;

cataracts, and overwhelms with one vast deluge the whole expanse of cultivated Taste. In Raphael it is a current restricted to its proper channel, that rolls with majestic force, or glides with graceful dignity, through those tracts only, where it assimilates to the character of the country, and forms an appropriate feature of the scene.

Michael Angelo was, perhaps, the greatest genius* of which the history of the Art can boast ; he was certainly the greatest artist, but surely, not the greatest painter : here Raphael rises to our view, and in every quality of good taste, except that before conceded, takes the lead of his competitor. If the one has imagined a race of giants, the other has dignified the race of man. Michael Angelo swells his subject to his conceptions ; Raphael suits his conceptions to his subject : the first shoots farther, but the second hits the mark. The one is a racer that passes all his com-

* The rank which Michael Angelo holds as a painter, he may be said to deserve by a double title : it is maintained not only by what he has done, but by what he has enabled others to do. His daring Genius first opened the path in which others have travelled beyond him ; and Raphael perhaps, is indebted to him for the improvement of those powers by which he surpassed his benefactor.

Rubens with spoils enrich'd—with honours graced,
 Completes the great triumvirate of Taste; 230
 High waves proud Competition's flag unfurl'd,
 And claims to share the homage of the world.

petitors, and then runs out of the course: the other with less mettle is more manageable, and wins the race by regulating his speed.

Line 230. *Completes the great triumvirate of Taste;*]—It is not without hesitation, that the Author has ventured to select Rubens as the lawful colleague of the two preceding great Artists in the empire of Virtù. All the powers of colouring appeared to maintain the pretensions of Titian, while Grace and Harmony combined to support the milder claims of Correggio.

The Author's difficulty on this occasion, however, has originated rather from a deference to the opinions of others, than from any fluctuation in his own. The more he has examined the works, or considered the extraordinary qualities of Rubens, the more he has been convinced of his just title to that exalted station which has been assigned to him in the text. The pedantic connoisseurs indeed, of all countries, from the learned and laborious Winckelman, to the light and superficial Webb, have united in depreciating his reputation: all the dealers in delicate sentiment—the double refiners of feeling—the self-satisfied professors of exquisite sensibility and pure Taste, have made it a point to consider him, as out of the sphere of their discriminative

The powers of painting in his praise combine,
And wreaths unfading round his temples twine;
For him, Invention opens all her springs, 235
And Fancy wafts him on her wildest wings;

sagacity, and have disregarded his merits, in an affected exaggeration of his faults.

But whatever the fame of Rubens may lose by the ignorance and prejudice of affected dilettanti, the admiration of the skilful artist and enlightened connoisseur, will more than sufficiently repay. However policy may induce him to chime in with the prevailing peal of criticism, the painter always does justice to Rubens in his heart; for he who tries to do what Rubens has done, will soon learn to venerate his powers, and appreciate the judgment of those, who are insensible to the wonders which they have performed.

The dominions of Rubens are too vast for the survey of an ordinary connoisseur; he must have attained to some considerable eminence of taste, who can take a comprehensive view of the various districts which are included within the circle of his sway. He is a monarch, whose powers have placed him above the law: invested with the inviolability of Genius, he rules his Art with lawless majesty; and seems not amenable to those petty tribunals, which decide on the pretensions of more limited authorities.

In truth of expression, in dignity of character, and purity of design, he has been surpassed by the great masters of

Her magic hand light Execution lends,
And Colouring her rich, tissued robe extends.
Whether, to heav'n devote, his skill divine,
Adorns, with sacred themes, the hallow'd shrine ; 240

the Roman School ; but in every other power and province of his art, he may be said to triumph in his turn. In the fire of imagination, in fertility of fancy, and force of impression, he has never been surpassed : in energy, and animation, he has never been equalled. His figures breathe, and act before us, with a vitality so vigorous ; their motions are so much alive, so sustained and instantaneous ; so indicative of the preceding and the ensuing, that we almost fancy we see the progression of event, and expect to behold the action finished which has been so impressively begun.

No other painter perhaps, can boast so indisputable a claim to the distinction of originality. The labours of Massacio and Leonardo da Vinci, are supposed to have supplied more than a hint of that grand gusto of design which afterwards appeared with such majesty in the productions of Michael Angelo ; Raphael himself, may be said to have risen, in some measure, on the wings of Buonaroti ; and the meridian splendour of Titian, had unequivocally dawned in the rich glow of Giorgione. But the taste, the style—the colouring—the execution of Rubens are peculiarly his own : we trace him to no higher spring : all his rivers rise in his proper territory, and partake of the qualities of the soil. He appears to have formed himself on

Or learn'd in Allegory's mystic maze,
The acts of Kings and Heroes he displays;
Whether, with nymphs and satyrs lured to rove,
He frolics, wild, in Pan's laugh-echoing grove;

no previous models; and what he derived from his predecessors he had the skill to conceal. However the labours of others may have supplied the seeds of his art, or assisted the cultivation, we find in his garden no transplanted beauties, no slips ingeniously grafted from the stock of his neighbours; all seems the natural growth of the soil, and displays its peculiar characteristics, in wild luxuriance of leaf, and un-repressible vigour of vegetation.

The versatility of his pencil, is one of its most extraordinary properties. If Michael Angelo be the most general artist, Rubens must be admitted to be the most general painter; he contends with the first, in every department of his art, and is a formidable rival in each. He has left no theme of Taste untouched, and we may apply to him what Johnson says of Goldsmith, that "*nullum quod tetigit quod non ornavit.*" His ambition also, was equal to his ability; the sweep of his wing takes in the most extended range of Art, from the loftiest flight of fancy, to the humblest toil of imitation. He can soar with Buonaroti to the sublimities of the Vatican, or descend with Sneyders to the lowest orders of animal life. From a proud contention with the powers of Claude, and Poussin, amidst the most magnificent scenery of Nature, he can turn

The landscape spreads with light, luxuriant grace, 245
Or hunts in sylvan scenes, the savage race ;
Whatever shape the graphic Proteus wears,
The full magnificence of Art appears ;

aside, in the humblest varieties of vegetable fame, to rival Rachel Ruisch and Vanhuysum.

We should rather pity, than envy the taste of those, whether painters or critics, who can behold such varied excellence without a touch of enthusiasm, or a tribute of admiration : we may consider their feelings as rather perverted than refined, and distrust at once their pretensions to sensibility, and their proficiency in science.

But it is useless to vindicate him who is secure in his own strength : the clamours of affectation can never seriously affect the fame of Rubens, while there shall exist judgment to distinguish merit, and courage to defend it : he moves like a Leviathan, in the ocean of Virtù, unhurt by the sword-fish of criticism, and regardless of the meaner fry of offensive imbecility, which follows in his mighty course.

The Author cannot refuse himself the pleasure of quoting the testimony of Reynolds, to the powers of Rubens, even where he has presumed to bend the bow of Michael Angelo. The examination of the picture of the fallen angels in the Dusseldorf Gallery, closes with the following observation : “ If we consider the fruitfulness of invention which is discovered in this work, or the skill which is

All that the head can plan, or hand perform;
Delight in theory, or in practice charm. 250
Yet Genius, oft unequal found, by turns,
Now blazes fierce, and now as feebly burns;
In Rubens' course we trace each wide extreme,
Its dazzling lustre, and its doubtful gleam:
But tho', like Avon's bard, his orb displays 255
Some darker parts amid the general blaze,

shewn in composing such an infinite number of figures, or the art of the distribution of the light and shadow, the freedom of hand, the facility with which it seems to have been performed, and what is more extraordinary, the correctness and admirable taste of drawing figures fore-shortened in attitudes the most difficult to execute, we must pronounce this picture to be one of the greatest efforts of Genius that ever the Art has produced."

From Reynolds's character of Rubens, which, for just, elegant, and discriminative criticism, is perhaps, unequalled amongst all the literary effusions which have been poured forth at the shrine of graphic Genius, the Author also subjoins the following applicable remark.

"Those who cannot see the extraordinary merit of this great painter, either have a narrow conception of the variety of Art, or are led away by the affectation of approving nothing but what comes from the Italian School."

Struck by his splendours, each rapt eye admires,
For while we see his spots, we feel his fires.

As petty chiefs fall prostrate, and obey,
While monarchs move their strength in proud array ;
But when the pomp is past, the peril o'er, 261
Rebel against the rod they kiss'd before ;
So, cavilling tribes who roam the graphic waste,
Scarce rescued from the savage state of Taste,
Assail the rights of Rubens, grudge his praise, 265
And talk high treason 'gainst the state he sways ;
But, when triumphant crown'd in every part,
He moves in some vast enterprize of Art,
His lawful claims, licentious critics own ;
And wondering painters bend before his throne. 270

But should more humble views of Art invite
The captive sense, and colouring's charms delight,
Behold Venetia's sons ! a gorgeous train !
Their ancient sway unrivall'd still maintain.
But chief, her pride, immortal Titian holds 275
The palette's brilliant treasures, and unfolds :
High o'er the skies, where beauteous Iris flings
Her bow divine, by Genius led, he springs,

Day's dazzling source with fearless plume explores,
Till lights pure offspring yield him all their stores. 280
Whate'er his vigorous pencil pours to view,
The face of Nature glows in golden hue,
While shedding light on beauty—bloom on youth,
The touch of Taste, displays the tint of Truth ;

Line 284. *The touch of Taste, displays the tint of Truth ;*]
—Of Rubens, Reynolds observes, that “he was the best workman with his tools, that ever handled a pencil.” The expression appears somewhat vague, but as far as the Author understands it, he is inclined to transfer to Titian whatever praise it may be supposed to convey. In a general sense, “the best workman with his tools” is he who employs them most skilfully ; for the excellence of the work, is the only safe test of the goodness of the workman ; and the best, is not he who performs with the greatest facility, but he who produces the greatest perfection. In this sense the commendation does not appear to be particularly applicable to Rubens, and therefore, could not have been intended by Reynolds. But if the remark (as may be more reasonably supposed) relates to the power of imitation only—to the dexterity of execution—the mere hand writing, in which the painter's thoughts are expressed, the Author conceives, that the highest refinement of those qualities is to be found in the practice of Titian, and that he is the more proper object of the panegyric.

If mere mechanism be considered—mere bravura of

With softness strength combines, with freedom, care,
Depth, without darkness—splendour, without glare. 286
Warm from his hand, the Queen of Beauty claims
The critic's homage, and his heart inflames :

penciling, without reference to the grace, fidelity, and vivacity of representation, the powers of both Rubens and Titian, may be surpassed by the decorator of a Birmingham tea-board ; but if the best workman with his tools, be he, who combines in the representation of an object, the most scientific truth of expression, with the purest taste of execution ; whose pencil unites to the most delicate refinement of hue, the most appropriate freedom of hand, and the happiest selection of accident ; it will be difficult to set aside, even in favour of Rubens, the pretensions of Titian to that character.

We should be careful, not to confound a mechanical sleight of hand—the mere parade of penciling, with those higher merits of the workman, which, what is commonly called execution, tends more to impede than produce.

But if imitation be the essence of painting, and if Titian be considered the best of all imitators, it may perhaps be asked, why he should not be esteemed the greatest of all painters ? A few observations will explain.

Though, in a general sense, painting may be said to be imitation, yet, that imitation consists of different kinds, more or less mental or mechanical ; as, imitation of arrangement, or disposition—of form—of character—of ex-

O'er all her form, a mellow'd lustre shines,
In luscious languor every limb reclines ; 290
Light o'er each part, the love-taught pencil plays,
And blushing sweets at every touch betrays ;

pression—of light and shade—and of colours. Imitation may also be considered under two heads—imitation of that idea, object, or picture, which exists only in the mind ; and imitation of an object, or picture as presented to the eye ; the latter of these, is, in the painter's language, more particularly termed imitation, as an exercise of the eye, and the hand only : the former is called invention, and includes a vigorous effort of the memory and imagination. As every Art claims our esteem, in proportion to the degree of intellectual power which it displays, it follows, that the inventor is superior to the imitator. The conception of a subject, story, or plot, the discovery and connection, of such events and circumstances, as are best calculated to convey whatever moral the poet and the painter design to express, must be considered the first and highest effort of invention ; as requiring the purest exercise of the mental faculties ; the most independant of external aids, and unmingled with mechanical operations. From this point the poet and the painter start in different directions, each to run his particular career.

The subject, as conceived in the painter's mind, must now be transferred to the material upon which he works, and such an arrangement made of the figures and objects con-

Effects so rich, by means so simple wrought !

'Tis magic's sport to mock the toil of thought ;

'Tis Time's increasing wonder, as he pores, 295

'Tis Painting's miracle, and Taste adores !

Pleased could the Muse the grateful task pursue,
And each bright ornament of Art review,

nected with it, as may be most judiciously adapted to strike the eye and the mind of the beholder. This second operation of invention is called disposition, or composition, and forms the first part of imitation, in its more general sense.

The subject however, may be well conceived, the scene well arranged, and the objects properly placed, without any particular grace, energy, or animation in the action of the figures represented ; picturesque, appropriate, and elegant action therefore, may be considered the third part of invention, and the second of the higher kind of imitation. It is obvious, that all the foregoing merits may exist in a considerable degree, without conspicuous beauty or symmetry in the forms, just adaptation in the characters, or due discrimination in the passions attempted to be expressed ; and it is equally obvious, that the several parts of the Art, which come under the description of subject, composition, action, form, character, and expression, may be acquired in great perfection, without any superior

Delighted, lingering in the paths of fame,
To mark with honours due, each humbler name ; 300
But, that she fears the truant song might seem
Too oft excursive, wandering from her theme :

skill in *chiaro 'scuro*, and colouring : the most essential and intellectual parts of the Art therefore, are comparatively, independant of the two last qualities ; and he who displays the former, in the greatest perfection, must always be esteemed the greatest painter, although he may be surpassed in those subordinate and more mechanical accomplishments.

Though not the best imitator of a particular individual, or object, he is the best imitator of general nature, in her most dignified features and impressive effects—he represents man and passion—sentiment and situation with the greatest fidelity and discrimination, though he may but inaccurately express those inferior qualities of Nature and Art, which are so important and attractive to the common eye.

It is upon the principles here stated, that the Roman School takes the lead of all the other schools of painting, and that Raphael takes precedence of all painters. Titian surpasses Raphael in the merits of colouring, *chiaro 'scuro* and execution ; but Raphael excels Titian in all that is valuable in invention, judicious in composition, energetic in action, correct in form, dignified in character, and appropriate in expression. The one commands in a particular province, but the other rules in the general empire of Art,

Yet, should her feeble pinion stretch so far,
 'Twere needless toil to number every star ;
 No aid of optick science it requires, 305
 To point the eye to planetary fires,
 That beaming glories, burst upon the sight,
 And strike at once, by magnitude and light.

Yet, not forgotten 'mongst the radiant train,
 Thy boast, Bologna ! claims no common strain ; 310
 Carrachi hail ! in fame and friendship join'd,
 Kindred in blood, and close in Art combined ;
 'Twas thine awhile, triumphant to sustain
 The drooping Muse, and guide the graphic train ;
 To form a style, where painting's scatter'd rays, 315
 Collected in one dazzling focus blaze ;
 Where Genius glowing with young Ammon's fires,
 To rule o'er every realm of Taste aspires :

and if he be comparatively defective in the lower departments of imitation, it is only, because he has been occupied by nobler functions, and engaged in the more comprehensive operations of his sway.

Line 318. *To rule o'er every realm of Taste aspires:]*—
 The school founded by the Carrachi at Bologna is particularly distinguished by the comprehensive plan of study, upon

Disdains the common conquest of a part,
And grasps with daring hand the globe of Art. 320

Still might immortal names prolong my lays,
Deserve your study, and demand your praise ;

which they proposed to erect their reputation. To combine in one grand scheme of art, those scattered merits, of which the attainment of one, in an eminent degree, had been thought sufficient to employ the attention and establish the celebrity of other Artists, must be considered a design, daring and ambitious at least, if not prudent and practicable.

The propriety of their attempt however, has been much questioned, and as their example in this respect, has not been often imitated, we must suppose it to be generally disapproved.

That he who is diligent in pursuit of one object, will be more likely to obtain his end, than he who divides his attention amongst many, is an observation as trite as it is true. That one part of the art also, carried to great perfection, is of more value than several parts cultivated only to mediocrity, will doubtless be thought equally evident. These however, like all general principles, will admit of qualification, and may be very injudiciously applied.

To fail in a great enterprise, may be sometimes, more honourable than to succeed in one of inferior consequence: he whose ardour of ascent is obliged to stop short of the summit of *Ætna*, must not be classed with him

Graceful, Correggio's mellow pencil flows,
In milder majesty of Art he glows ;
The powers of harmony support his throne, 325
And Parma proudly claims him for her own.

whose ambitious career is accomplished on the top of the Monument.

Every Art is made up of certain parts, which may be called its instruments—the means by which its effects are produced : in proportion to the skill with which he uses these instruments, we value the dexterity of the workman ; and according to the subject upon which he employs them, we estimate his genius. The instruments of painting are design, composition, chiaro 'scuro, colouring, and execution ; as the instruments of poetry are measure, verse, rhyme, melody, metaphor, &c. ; and the painter, or the poet, who is inexpert in the use of any one of these agents, must be confessed to want one of the essential tools of his trade. They may be termed the features of the graphic and poetic face, through whose operation must be displayed, all the different meanings and emotions of the Muse : they are the prime elements of expression in both Arts, and to combine them in one grasp, seems not only desirable, but necessary to complete the character of a poet, or a painter.

That it is difficult to effect this union, appears to be no good argument against the propriety of attempting it. What is easily performed, is seldom highly esteemed : the crown of Taste is not to be conferred on ordinary claims,

Rembrandt, supreme in chiaro 'scuro crown'd,

In practice strong, in principle profound.

Poussin on strength of antique lore relies,

And Veronesé with Vecelli vies.

330

or common achievements; and we have a right to exact from the workman, a due endeavour, to accomplish every thing that is essential to the perfection of the work.

But, the instruments of the painter, it may be said, are of such arduous management, that to acquire equal skill in the use of them all, is beyond the reach of human ingenuity, and to attempt it, but an injudicious diversion of those powers, which, in a more restricted exertion, might attain to pre-eminent dexterity; that design, composition, chiaro 'scuro, and colouring, though but parts of painting, are studies, each of which, is in itself, sufficient to occupy through life, the whole force of the human faculties, and that conspicuous excellence in one of those qualities, has always been considered an undeniable proof of genius, and a certain passport to fame.

A little experience of the difficulties which attend the acquisition of power in any of those departments of Art, certainly, gives a plausibility to this reasoning, which is not a little assisted, by the consideration that no individual has exhibited all those merits in any conspicuous perfection, and that few have excelled in more than one of them.

The difficulties of painting however, in all its constituent parts, may be a good argument, why a man should not

Some, prized for parts, to reputation reach,
And all, consulted in their sphere, may teach ;

attempt to become a painter, but can be no argument, why a painter should not endeavour to become skilled in all the constituent parts of his Art. The respectable degree, in which the Carrachi acquired them, is a proof, that much may be effected ; and warrants us in believing, that they would have been oftener attained, if they had been oftener attempted.

Although the human powers are bounded, their limits are unknown ; the sphere of their influence has always been extended by genius and ambition, beyond the calculations of prudence, or the hopes of timidity ; and he who justly estimates, how far performance has exceeded expectation in the past, will not be easily induced, to check the boldness of enterprize, or divert the vigorous wing from an exalted flight, in the cold anticipation of a fall. We may fail by attempting too little, as well as too much ; and we should not, too readily, provide excuses for indolence, or countenance the desire to ascribe that to the weakness of our nature, which is only the defect of our industry.

We must not confound the ends, or objects of the Art, with its means, or agents ; history, portrait, landscape, familiar life, still life, &c. are the objects of painting ; design, composition, colouring, &c. (as before observed) are the agents, by which those objects are effected ; and although we should perhaps, confine our attention to some

The curious chemistry of Taste employ,
Extract the gold, and leave the coarse alloy.
His eye impartial Genius glancing round, 335
Pays homage still, wherever merit's found;

one of the former, yet in all of the latter, we are justly required to be skilled.

To urge the painter, or the poet, to the pursuit of excellence, in all the different provinces of their respective arts, would be equally absurd and ineffectual. But surely, it is no unreasonable precept, which teaches the propriety of endeavouring to excel in all those qualities, which are essential to the perfection of each. How are the magical effects of Rembrandt degraded by the gross vulgarity of his characters, and the revolting deformities of his design ! How are the purity, propriety, and correctness of Poussin, deprived of their impression, by his unskilful colouring, and unscientific effects !

A consideration of human weakness, may lead us to excuse him who does not possess all the instruments of his art, but should not induce us to justify him, who does not attempt to acquire them.

From peculiarities of eye and taste, we are commonly, seduced in our practice, to a preference of some particular quality, which perhaps, becomes the most important in our account, because it is most within our reach : but this tendency to contract the sphere of our exertion, and leave, as it were, some of the most effective organs of our Art, com-

From each slow son of patient labour learns,
And praise in Dutch fidelity discerns.

paratively inert and unexercised, should be rather opposed than encouraged.

It seems unwise, to establish on principle, a kind of systematic indifference to the attainment of any of the essential qualities of good Art.

The Sculptor would not be much applauded, who in pursuit of form, should neglect expression, and grace ; nor should the painter be justified, who contents himself, with exhibiting the proportions of Apollo in parchment, or lavishing the blooms of an Hebe, on awkwardness and deformity.

The design of Raphael, the colouring of Titian, the chiaro 'scuro of Rembrandt, and the execution of Tintoret, we perhaps may not reasonably expect to see surpassed : but to collect those scattered rays in one bright assemblage of graphical perfections, is an achievement reserved for the enterprising spirit of modern times, and worthy the ambition of Genius to accomplish.

The Author has the mortification to perceive, that sentiments similar to those which are here expressed, have experienced the pointed opposition of the learned Professor of Painting before alluded to ; and it may perhaps, be thought a proof of some hardihood, to avow opinions, which, even the high authority of the Carrachi could not shield from his eloquent reprobation. But though the

Let not the pedantry of Taste despise

The humbler beauties of Batavian skies: 340

Tho' Painting there, no epic wreath requires,

Nor feels, nor feigns to feel poetic fires;

principles of the Bolognan School make but a sorry figure in Agostino Carrachi's poetry, they do not appear to be very happily ridiculed in the Professor's prose: the battery of illustration which he brings to bear upon the argument, does not seem to play with much effect; and if a union of the different merits of painting, in one comprehensive style, be absurd and impracticable, it is neither very logically nor analogically proved, by comparing it to "a multitude of dissimilar threads composing one uniform texture, a dissemination of spots making masses, or a little of many things producing a legitimate whole."*

The rhyming recipe of Agostino certainly, is not composed "*secundum artem*;" and though the present Author might be suspected to have a fellow-feeling for a brother bard, as he is himself engaged in a similar sort of poetical practice, yet he surrenders it most willingly to the Professor's indignation. The laureat of the eclectic style is perhaps treated more harshly "than might the offence beseem." But in upsetting the sonnet, his sarcastic assailant must not imagine that he has subverted the school. Until symmetry of form—grace of action—beauty of colour, and a happy

* Fuzeli's Lectures, page 82.

Content on boors and burgomasters still,
At wakes and weddings, to display her skill ;
Tho' Fancy too, each towering flight deterr'd, 345
Degenerates there, a tame domestic bird !

effect of light and shade, shall be proved an inconsistent assemblage of qualities in the works of Nature, there may be some excuse for those who persist to think, that they are merits by no means incompatible with each other, and which might possibly be united in the productions of Art.

Line 340. *The humbler beauties of Batavian skies :*]—The contempt which some critics express for the works of the Dutch School, seems to be equally unjust and absurd ; and may be suspected to proceed rather from the affectation, than the refinement of Taste.

Familiar life, is a legitimate object of the pencil as well as heroic life ; and though, in a comparative estimate of the different pursuits of painting, the one is greatly inferior in importance and impression to the other, yet each has its value in the scale of human ability ; its appropriate excellence, and peculiar praise.

The claims of merit certainly, should not be confounded, nor the gradations of fame so deranged, as to deck the brows of Hudibras or Hemskirk, with the wreaths of Homer and of Raphael. We ought prudently to measure out our reverence, and not lavish on inferior pretensions, those honours of admiration, which are the only adequate reward of noble and heroic achievement : but neither should we

In homely scenes alone, familiar found,
To skip, and sport, and flutter on the ground;
Strong, in their glass reflected tho' we own,
The broad low comedy of life alone, 350

wantonly degrade the efforts of humbler Genius in a lower sphere; nor illiberally refuse all commendation to him who has done well, because he cannot be said to have done best.

The intellectual as well as the physical appetite requires variety, and however refined by delicacies, will sometimes, have a relish for homely fare. The mind cannot always feed upon the epics of Poetry and Art: he that has followed with rapture the flight of the eagle, will at length turn his eye to the ground, and be pleased with the flutterers of the hedge. From the sublimities of Homer and Michael Angelo, it may not be unpleasant, to unbend a little with the humour of Horace and Hogarth; and the seriousness of history and the severity of science, will often be agreeably relieved in the ridicule of comedy and the delusions of romance.

We do not like to have our faculties always upon the stretch: high scenes, and high sentiments, require an effort in the Reader, and the Spectator, as well as in the Poet and the Painter. We cannot be long wound up to the heroic pitch, without desiring to descend to a lower key—to modulate in softer tones of sentiment, and simpler movements of delight.

He who can fill up the chasm between apathy and ex-

Yet Truth is there, and Nature, while we trace
Her coarser character, and common face,
Avows her image mark'd on every part,
And by her sanction consecrates their Art.

tacy, with innocent gratification ; who makes no great demands on our intellects or our feelings, and without pretending to instruct or astonish, aspires only to please and amuse, is a valuable contributor to the stock of our most useful enjoyments, and deserves well his rank and reward.

Familiar life is the comedy of Art ; and though the Dutch dramatists of the pencil delight in the coarser cast of humour, yet, their characters are so well preserved, their situations so well chosen, and their scenery so appropriate, that it is impossible to refuse them the praise of excellence in their peculiar sphere ; and as the theatrical critic will sometimes allow the emotions of pity and terror to subside in a farce or a pantomime, it would not be derogatory to the dignity of the connoisseur, in the languid pauses of epic admiration, to turn from the sublimities of Italy to the drolls of Batavia, and condescend to smile with Ostade or Teniers.

But the would-be critic is ever aspiring to the altitudes of Art ; always struggling up the steep of grandeur, or panting on some eminence of pride ; his taste is too refined to breathe in the low regions of familiar life : he has no sympathy with common scenes, or common sentiments, and

But where, alas ! shall Study's eager eye . . . 355
Behold those glories of the graphic sky ?
In Turkish state immured from vulgar view,
Collections are seraglios of Virtù ;
Where Painting's beauties shine, shut up with care,
While connoisseurs, like eunuchs, guard them there !

despises every thing as vulgar and low, that is not elevated and sublime.

But whatever objection may be made to the subjects upon which the Dutch School principally employed their talents, their excellence as imitators, cannot reasonably be disputed : they are the only painters, who may be said to have completely effected their object, and succeeded in producing all the perfection which is required in their style of Art. He who desires to see the characters and manners of common life, more faithfully, or skilfully represented, will probably, never be gratified ; and must have formed to himself, some fanciful standard of excellence, which Nature has not supplied, and painting cannot approach. From their best productions, the proudest pencil may learn the value of labour and patience ; may perceive the possibility of being accurate and detailed, without being mean or minute—may acquire the grace of facility, without negligence or affectation, and the charm of spirit without the sacrifice of truth.

CANTO FOURTH.

ARGUMENT.

The Student recommended to visit the Schools of Italy—facilities afforded to the study of Art in that country, and the admiration in which the productions of Taste are held there—caution to beware of the enervating pleasures which have there so often subdued the vigour of Genius, and relaxed the powers of industry—caution to beware of the fluctuation of Taste which results from the different objects pursued in different schools—influence of local prejudices upon Art—influence of precedent in matters of Taste—freedom of judgment recommended—fickleness of judgment condemned—exemplified in the character of Vibratio—the highest skill in the practical part of the Art insufficient, without the culture of the mind—no wreaths to be gained without knowledge and science—ignorance and presumption repelled by every Muse—condemned by Taste to drudge in vulgar toils—the painter required to be skilled in representing all the varieties of action, passion, and character, in man—the study of history and poetry recommended—Homer, Virgil, Milton and Shakespear alluded to—allusion to a few of the old masters who were most conspicuous for their general knowledge—Leonardo da Vinci—Raphael—Michael Angelo—Julio Romano, and Rubens—allusion to Sir Joshua Reynolds as a more modern illustration of the advantages of a highly cultivated mind in an artist—character of Reynolds, considered as the founder of the English School—influence of his genius upon the taste and reputation of his country, with an allusion to his loss of sight, and death.



CANTO IV.

Sic est; acerba fata Romanos agunt.

HORACE. Epod. 7.

SHOULD Fate allow, then seek in foreign skies
 Those needful aids your native land denies ;
 Lo ! where Italia spreads her boundless stores,
 And courts the Student to her classic shores.

Line 1. *Should Fate allow, then seek in foreign skies*—
 Although the pillage of Italy by the modern Mummius, must
 have deprived that country, of many of those attractions
 which rendered it interesting to the Connoisseur and
 the Artist, yet, the Author is not disposed to retract the
 advice which he has given in the text. The objects of Art
 in Rome, and other places, may be diminished by the de-
 predations of insatiate ambition, but while the walls of the

Italia, long with Art's chief honours graced, 5
Still holds the rich inheritance of Taste,
Tho' quite extinct the race of Genius there,
And not a branch the stems of glory bear ;

Vatican remain undivested of their ornaments by time, or barbarism, the ancient seat of the Cæsars must ever be the shrine of Virtù—the sanctified Mecca, to which, all the followers of Art will turn with devotion, and hope to make a pilgrimage before they die.

Although the portentous comet of the day, has occasioned some derangement in the circles of Taste, as well as the systems of politics, and displaced both pictures and potentates in his pestilential course, yet, the greater stars of Art still remain undisturbed : Raphael and Michael Angelo, still shine in the Ausonian sky, eclipsing the collected lustre of the Louvre, and proclaiming the supremacy of Rome.

That the principal productions of those great Artists have been allowed to remain in their present situation, must indeed, be wholly ascribed to the impracticability of removing them. If the Sistine Chapel could have been conveyed to Paris, by any means less miraculous, than those, which formerly transferred from Palestine, the chapel of our Lady of Loretto, there is reason to believe, that neither the prayers of Piety, nor the expostulations of Taste, would have had sufficient influence to retain it on the shores of the Tiber.

As a School of Sculpture indeed, Rome must now be

While, like her once proud temples, she appears
The mould'ring monument of former years, 10
Yet, tho' no more her ancient virtues shine,
The grateful Arts still glow in her decline ;
A friendly ray on Rome degenerate shed,
When Power, and Wealth, and Freedom—all have fled.
There, Painting's splendours court the curious eye, 15
And temples hospitably open lie ;

content to yield the palm to Paris : the treasures which she retains, cannot be compared with those which she has lost : though rich and sparkling still are the jewels of her crown, the great brilliants are removed to the less majestic diadem of her rival. All the marbles of the ancients, from the best preserved and most colossal specimen of their skill, to the smallest and most mutilated fragment, cannot, in the eye of the Artist, compensate for the loss of the Apollo, the Venus, the Laocoon, the Hercules, the Antinous, the Meleager, the Torso, the Gladiator, and other celebrated works. In taste, there is no balancing the account between quantity and quality ; the largest mass of mediocrity can never approach to the value of excellence. The painter, the architect, and the antiquary, may still triumph on their approach to the capital of the ancient world ; but the Sculptor, who now passes the Louvre on his route to Rome, shews more of the curiosity than the sensibility of Taste, and may almost be said to leave his Art behind him.

Where all whose liberal bosoms have embraced
The Critic's creed—the heav'n-taught truth of Taste,
To Virtù's shrine, unquestion'd may repair,
And pour to Genius genuine homage there. 20

There, gorgeous palaces with pride make known,
Their fame in frescos, and their wealth in stone.
Expiring Pontiffs, ere reduced to dust,
Entail the picture, and bequeath the bust,

Line 23. *Expiring Pontiffs, ere reduced to dust,*]—Amongst the advantages to be expected from a visit to Italy, it is perhaps, not one of the least, that the painter may there learn to entertain a proper respect for his profession. He may there behold the dignity of his Art, not only, in the wonders which it has produced, but in the honours that have been paid to it; and find the Author participating in the esteem which has been excited by his works.

The English Artist in particular, will there have an opportunity to breathe, out of the commercial bustle that surrounds him—to escape the “*Auri sacra fames*,” that rages at home: he will have leisure to consider his art as a means of life in fame, as well as life in luxury, and decide the question between glory and riches.

In this “*nation boutiquière*,” as we have been contemptuously called, if the Artist is proud of his profession, it is more from the honours which it inherits, than the homage

While grateful heirs receive the gift elate, 25
And prize the statue more than the estate.
Yet there, around tho' graphic wonders rise,
And classic stores at every step surprise ;

which it receives ; more from the respect with which it inspires him, than the estimation which it procures for him. There are no prejudices of refinement in his favour—no partialities of enlightened policy to give him consideration with the public, and rescue him, from the coarse insolence of wealth, and the contemptuous disregard of pride. His Art, though a diamond shining amongst the pebbles of ordinary ingenuity, is not yet set in the esteem of his countrymen, or valued beyond its coarser companions.

Whatever rank he may hold in the opinion of the few who can understand and appreciate his claims, with the many, the Artist is but a maker of pictures and statues—a manufacturer of figures and furniture ; in no other respect distinguished from his brethren of the lathe and the loom, than as less employed, and worse rewarded ; as contributing to the general stock of production, an article less useful in the exigence of society, and less available in the operations of commerce.

But where trade is every thing, every thing must necessarily be trade ; there is no exemption for Genius or Taste : they must take their stall in the market, and cry, “ who buys ? ” like the rest of the fraternity, though few esteem, and fewer still understand their commodities.

But where the work is depreciated, what hope of re-

Tho' each spot, sacred to some deed of fame,
Inspires the Bard, or spreads the patriot flame; 30
To souls refined, some kindred spark imparts,
Excites to eloquence, or leads to arts;
Yet there, be cautious, there, the clime beguiles,
And syren pleasures spread seducing wiles;
Too oft, the soften'd youth, subdued at length, 35
As languor steals upon the nerve of strength,

gard for the workman? The intercourse of trade acknowledges no currency of commendation—no exchange of value in reverence—admits no items of praise or respect, to balance the account of ability, or make up the deficiency of coarser equivalents. He who is accustomed to pay, and to be paid, neither makes nor admits any other demand; money is the only reward he esteems or requires; it is therefore, the only reward which he bestows; and when he has paid the Artist his price, he conceives the account to be closed, and rejects all after claims of respect for his merit, as a species of imposition, and “not to be found in the bond.” Thus it is, that in a commercial country, praise, honour, and respect, are put out of circulation, even amongst those, who value them above all other coin: thus it is, that money supersedes all other means of remuneration, and becomes the only measure of merit, without the power of rewarding it.

Sinks, lost to fame, 'midst all Italia's stores,
And lingers life's bright summer on her shores ;
Till paralyzed, the powers of Genius lie,
And glory fades for ever from his eye. 40

Oft too, tho' Labour husbands all his hours,
And zeal, still ardent, spurs unslacken'd powers,
Ambition's views mistaken studies spoil,
And folly frustrates every hope of toil.
Where'er the Student turns, at every stage, 45
He finds some fashion of the pencil rage ;
Some mould of taste that custom still decrees,
In which e'en Genius must be cast to please ;
Caught in the current as opinion flows,
His judgment vainly struggles to oppose ; 50
At length the idol of the day admires,
And lost in local prejudice expires.

In every School some favourite system sways,
As local Taste to partial toil betrays ;

Line 53. *In every School some favourite system sways,*]—
It is curious to observe, how much the principles of truth
appear to depend upon the prejudices of place : our senti-
ments result from our situation, and he who fancies him-

Their merit, like their money, they receive, 55
And sterling, only by their stamp believe.

self most free to expatiate in the boundless regions of knowledge, is shackled in associations, and fettered by fashions of the understanding, of whose operation he is unconscious, and from which, he can rarely escape. We put to sea, as we fondly think, with all our sails set, to navigate the vast ocean of science ; but our faculties are landlocked : we still remain paddling in some creek of prejudice,—still cruising in the accustomed tracks, and influenced by the usual currents.

In every age and country, how has the stride of science been retarded by the two great fetters of time and place ! while Genius has struggled ineffectually, and reason remonstrated in vain.

If the robust and vigorous powers of Science and Philosophy have not been able to extricate their interests entirely, from these trammels, it is not surprising, that the refined and delicate principles of Taste, should be almost wholly subjected to their influence : we find, therefore, that painting is peculiarly dependant on local circumstances ; and although the model, Nature, is every where the same, yet the imitation differs, not only, according to talents and objects, but to countries and academies. Some particular theory of Taste, some peculiar idea of perfection, operates in every establishment : some favourite fashion of Art prevails in every circle, to which, all must conform who

Some powerful Genius leaves his age behind,
And sets his mark on each succeeding mind;

aspire to please, or hope to be received into good company.

Thus it is, that the same Artist would be a colourist at Venice, and a designer at Rome; that he would become a painter of scripture in Italy, of drolls in Holland, of portraits in England, and of operas in France. In one school, we find correct forms exhibited in all the confusion of lights, colours, and reflections; in another, shapeless masses arranged with all the artifice of light and shade. Here, we have laborious detail pursuing minuteness to the pores of the flesh, and the threads of the drapery: there, you behold breadth, sweeping away all distinction of parts, and spirit, scarcely condescending to mark a muscle or a fold.

Few are found with faculties sufficiently strong, to rise above the atmosphere of mind in which they live, and take those clearer, and more comprehensive views of Art, through which only, we can discover where its perfection lies, and by what road we can most successfully approach to it.

The Students who travel to Italy for improvement, too often furnish an illustration of these remarks.

A young man, who has acquired considerable skill in those parts of his art, which are in fashion at home, is surprised to see his stock of merits but little esteemed in a foreign Academy: he finds new ideas afloat there,—other

Decides the source whence all perfection's sought,
The track of study, and the train of thought. 60

objects of ambition, and different measures of merit. He soon begins to suspect the value of his own acquirements, and remains for some time, perplexed in anxious vibration between the school which he has left, and that to which he has resorted. The influence of example however, and the sympathy of sentiment, are powerful agents in young minds ; he naturally desires the esteem of those who are around him, and he perceives, that to acquire it, he must pursue their track. He first imitates their practice, and then approves of it—admits their principles, and then adopts them. Conformity, soon leads to conversion, and like all converts, he becomes violent against those whom he has forsaken. But the time that will suffice for subversion, is not sufficient for establishment ; he stays just long enough abroad, to forget what he has learned at home, and to despise the taste of his own country, without substituting a better in its place. He loses the peculiar merit of the English School, without acquiring that of the Italian, and returns at length, to exemplify in a state of mortified pride, and hopeless imbecility, the defects of both.

We must not however, forget the use of travelling to a painter, in the consideration of its abuse ; or condemn the practice of visiting the Schools of Italy, as unnecessary, because it is often unavailing.

He who has made little progress abroad, would probably,

In law, not more despotic than in wit,
To precedent the proudest minds submit.

have made still less at home. Travelling cultivates our qualities, but does not create them: "*cælum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt*," and if we take out copper, we must not expect, that any transalpine process of alchemy will convert it to gold.

We are too apt, to affect a contempt for advantages which we have not enjoyed, and to depreciate in others, what we should prize in ourselves. But, it should be remembered, that the most eminent painters of this country, in every department of Art, have thought it useful, to resort to those ancient springs of Taste; and may be supposed, to have drawn from them, some portion of their excellence. Assuredly, before we can decry the practice with effect, we are bound to prove, that we have acquired equal skill at home.

Genius must always derive some benefit from that expansion of the mind, which travel has a powerful tendency to produce—must find it useful, to break for a time, from the narrow circle of local associations, and make an excursion into new territories of Taste: his stores of imagination become enriched by the accession of new ideas; his conceptions of merit are elevated by the contemplation of its noblest examples; he measures himself by a different standard from that which he has been accustomed to use, and forms a juster estimate of his stature, and his strength.

Painters and Poets, free of Nature's reign,
The charter boast, yet wear the willing chain :
Taste hugs the yoke of Aristotle's laws, 65
And Maro's steed in Homer's harness draws.

His merits are no longer magnified through the medium of local partiality, nor his defects excused in the influence of general example : his Art stands divested of artificial props, and social prejudices, to be tried on principles different from those upon which he has been accustomed to regulate his taste.

The painter who goes through such a process, must be the better for it. Contrariety begets comparison, and comparison invigorates judgment ; by seeing every thing that has been done, he learns better what to do ; and from the experience of other systems can relinquish or correct his own ; till at length, enlightened by theory, and accomplished by practice, he returns to refine the Taste, reform the arts, and dignify the reputation of his country.

Line 64. *Taste hugs the yoke of Aristotle's laws,*]—In the history of the human mind, there is perhaps, nothing more extraordinary, than that submissive humility with which all ages have bowed in matters of taste, to the influence of authority and the dictates of criticism—that unhesitating homage, which mankind have continued to pay to the throne of antiquity, without questioning either the justice of its establishment, or the utility of its sway.

The principles of freedom seem to have made slower

Then still with freedom judge—with prudence praise;
Nor strain the eye in adulating gaze :
Implicit faith no canons here require,
Bigots alone from prejudice admire. 70

progress in Taste, even than in politics ; and the “*jus divinum*” of critics, outlasts that of kings.

Political and poetical despotisms have always had their advocates : Sir Robert Filmer have swarmed in defence of each, but no powerful champion—no eloquent Locke, has arisen in the regions of Parnassus, to expose the folly and servility of their principles ; to assert the natural freedom of the human faculties, and rescue the votaries of Taste, from the vassalage of Time.

It is curious to reflect, that fewer advocates in the cause of intellectual liberty have appeared in the land of free-men, than in that, which we have been accustomed to consider the land of slaves. Proud of our political and religious emancipation, we contentedly submitted to the “*stat pro ratione voluntas*” of criticism, and while in France, the blind and indiscriminating adoration paid to the productions of the ancients, was ably exposed by the powers of De la Motte, Fontenelle, Terrasson, St. Hyacinthe and others, the ranks of literature in this country, remained passive spectators of their exertions, and refused to furnish their contingent of spirit and ability in support of the common cause.

Our scholars indeed, though sometimes Whigs in politics,

Your judgment guide by no despotic rule,
Nor bow to right divine in any school;
A British boldness e'en in Taste retain,
The fire of freedom never glows in vain.

have always been Tories in taste: they may be Round-heads occasionally, in religion, but they are proud to be Cavaliers in criticism. With the servility of courtiers, they encircle the ancient majesty of erudition, and whatever they may themselves think of the object of their homage, they never fail to magnify his perfections, and inculcate the duty of submission and veneration, on all those who cannot approach the throne to examine his pretensions.

The tardy operation of reason and common sense, has however, of late, produced some amelioration in the monarchy of mind; the severity of the established despotism, is somewhat relaxed; and though we are still, far removed from that complete emancipation which the interests of Taste require, yet, there is some appearance, of our approaching to the period, when the supremacy of the ancients may be questioned in literature, as well as in science; when the moderns shall dare to think for themselves in the former, as well as in the latter; and derive the laws of composition and the measures of merit, from higher authority, than the practice of Homer, or the ipse dixit of Aristotle.

But the prejudice which idolizes antiquity, and pays homage to Time, seems to be congenial to the nature of

Yet, while exclusive homage you disclaim, 75
And scorn the servile sycophants of fame,
Beware his weakness, who, to all untrue,
By turns, will every style of art pursue ;

man, and is strengthened by every impression of his education.

Our first effort, is imitation, and our first lesson, obedience. We are taught to look backward with confidence, and forward with fear. To distrust every thing that is novel, and depend upon every thing that is old. The yoke of authority is fastened upon us, when we are too weak to resist it, and when the season of strength arrives, we are so accustomed to its pressure, that we have no desire to shake it off.

To know what others have known, is made our highest pride ; to do what others have done, our greatest ambition. It would seem, as if the sole business of the present world, was to ascertain the progress of the past, while like rich heirs, we display all the wealth of our ancestors without attempting to add to the stock. We study only the studies of others, receive with submission the results of their enquiries, and are pleased to be spared the task of observation, and the trouble of research.

Thus it is, that the characteristics of originality are unknown to modern productions, that we become the "*imitatores servum pecus*," that we paint only what has been painted, and write only, what has been written before. We

Whose tissue Taste, for ever changing, seems
'Twixt praise and censure, always in extremes; 80
Each day seduced, to some new favourite flies,
Applauds the present, and the past decries;

may be said, to live upon the wit of our predecessors, and serve up their ideas at second heat.

Yet the wisdom of mankind at large, grows and ripens like the wisdom of an individual; as years and centuries roll away, new facts generate new conclusions, and the errors of one day are rectified by the succeeding, through the maturing process of time. It seems extraordinary therefore, that in our general veneration for every thing that is old, we should pay so little regard to the age of experience; that we should so zealously prefer the early youth of human knowledge to its more vigorous manhood, and forget that Time himself, grows wise as he grows old.

But we are taught to discredit the present with all its accumulating advantages; we distrust our own impressions in compliment to those of our ancestors, and make a voluntary surrender of our faculties to the influence of time and place. We cast our metal in the mould prepared for us, and take the shape of our age, our country, and our school.

This quiet conformity, is perhaps, in religion and politics, the duty of a good citizen, for unsettled principles in either, are dangerous, and may tend to shake our loyalty as subjects, and our morality as men. Experience proves also,

Still wrong by system, e'en when right by chance,
This flimsy tribe can ne'er to fame advance,
Their froth of sense subsides, as passion cools, 85
To prejudice,—the principle of fools.
In minds, and monarchies, by favourites sway'd,
The state and intellect are both betray'd.

that in these two great concerns of human society, it is a hazardous and hopeless operation, to tamper with ancient prejudices and established systems. Yet, here it is, that we are ever restless and disobedient—always fermenting in perilous experiments of civil policy, or dissenting in pernicious fluctuations of religious faith; but all is orthodoxy and submission, where free-thinking might be indulged without the evils of infidelity, and liberty enjoyed without the danger of licentiousness.

In Taste, in Literature, and the Arts, there is surely, no good reason why we should resign our charter, and preach up passive obedience; in these tranquil pursuits, every man might reasonably be allowed to think for himself, without creating a sect or a faction, to disturb either the peace, or the devotion of society. These are tracts, in which we might hope to roam at large, without being hedged in by authority, or restricted to turnpike roads. Yet, we travel timorously through these delightful regions; forbidden to deviate from the common track, however alluring the prospect; and carefully hoodwinked by the critic at every stage.

Vibratio shifts with every wind that blows,
And loves and hates, as folly ebbs and flows: 90
Theme of his tongue, now Raphael rules the hour,
Deposed by Rembrandt, now resigns his power ;
His turn of worship Titian takes, and sways,
Till Rubens fires his raptures to a blaze.
Dark as an heathen temple, his dull mind, 95
Has ever some fond idol there enshrined,
Each, for a day, with fickle faith adored,
By fits and starts, rejected, and restored :
Fix'd to no principle of time, or Taste,
His skill mechanic, and his pains misplaced ; 100
His leisure lost ; his labour too abused,
And still by study, but the more confused ;
He wanders, vagrant like, o'er graphic ground,
And poaches every Painter's manor round ;
For petty plunder spreads abortive toils, 105
Nor thrives by theft, for what he steals he spoils.

Yet think not more than half achieved your part,
Tho' skill'd in all the *practical* of Art ;
Tho' firm and free, the well-plied pencil flows,
And all the palette at your pleasure glows ; 110
Tho' Greece and Italy their stores supply,
To form the hand, and to refine the eye ;

While fired by all the wonders wrought of old,
You pant for praise, and burn as you behold ;
The nobler task remains, by Taste design'd, 115
To crown your zeal—the culture of the mind.

Line 116. *To crown your zeal—the culture of the mind.*]

—As painting may be considered to include all the higher intellectual parts of poetry, the mind of the painter, requires to be formed by the same process, and to be furnished with the same materials as that of the poet. The office of both is to represent the beauties, and express the passions of Nature; from her magazine they must draw their stores, and though they have different modes of displaying, they have but one way of acquiring them.

Their respective arts, like different universities, receive them from the same school, and according to the solidity of their attainments in the one, will they obtain their degrees with honour in the other.

But while the present is the scene of their active observation, the past, also, must be the object of their studious enquiry. They must not only see man as he is, in the existing generation, but examine what he has been, in the former generations of mankind. They must trace him through all his gradations, from barbarism, to refinement—from ignorance, to science; from the dull calm of apathy, to the raging tempest of passion; from the lowest state of humanity, bordering on the brute, to the proudest elevation of virtue, approaching to a god.

This knowledge of man, under all his aspects, may be

As scanty crops repay the peasant's toil,
Till rich manures ameliorate the soil ;
So, in the nicer husbandry of Art,
Our labour's vain, the land is out of heart, 120

called the staple commodity of the painter's art—the essential article of his trade, without which, he can carry on no great operation that will not be attended with a waste of labour and a loss of reputation.

The most dextrous management of the pencil, constitutes but a superior kind of mechanic, unless it is accompanied by those qualities and acquirements of the mind, which render it subservient to noble and useful purposes. All the eloquence of Art is lost in the possession of him, who has no ideas worthy of communication. It signifies little, that the streams run freely, if they proceed from an impure source, and carry down nothing but mud and stones.

The painter must therefore, cultivate his understanding, while he exercises his hand ; he must have recourse to books, as well as to pictures ; and acquire the art of reflection, as well as the art of imitation.

In literature, every thing is a proper object of his study, that treats concerning nature, society, and man ; every thing, that can enrich the imagination by images, or inspire the fancy by wit ; that can enlighten the mind by science, or refine it by taste ; that can store the head with the materials of wisdom, or stimulate the heart by the examples of virtue.

It must be confessed however, that the process of im-

Till various knowledge gather'd round with care,
Invigorate the vegetation there.

The strongest mind tho' steady to one aim,
Must aid from parts co-operative claim,

provement here recommended, some of those who call themselves painters do not think it necessary to perform ; they seem to consider it, as amongst the non-essentials of their course—a troublesome deviation from the straight forward road of the pencil ; of which, it neither facilitates the progress, nor atones for the delay. It is not surprising therefore, that they who study painting as a trade, should practise it like tradesmen ; that they who consider ignorance no obstacle, should think meanness no vice ; and be willing to sacrifice to mercenary motives, the dignity of an Art, which suffers in their hands the double degradation of low minds, and low manners.

That this vulgar, mechanical spirit however, cannot be said to characterise the Artists of the present day, there are many conspicuous examples to prove ; and so little can it be ascribed to the Artists of former times, that it may be doubted, if in any other department of human ingenuity, such examples of general accomplishment, and various knowledge, can be produced, as have appeared to dignify and give lustre to the character of a painter.

The ancient masters were proud of their profession, and

Bee-like, sip honey from surrounding flowers, 125
And owe its greatness to confederate powers.

Thus slowly first, soft-trickling from its source,
The infant flood obscurely takes its course ;
Now gently spreading, drains the neighbouring ground,
And drinks up each fresh rising rill around ; 130

practised it as a noble occupation, which yielded to no other in the talents which it required, or the powers which it displayed.

They found their Art esteemed amongst the most civilized states, as the pride of cultivation. Drawn out by enlightened policy from the ranks of ordinary life, as the leaders of public Taste and refinement, they sought with zeal those qualifications, which were necessary to fit them for so honourable a destination ; they came to it therefore, with minds furnished from the stores of general knowledge, and elevated above the little motives of mercenary employment, by a just sense of those functions, which only Genius can ably perform, and only glory can adequately reward. Without any interruption of their proper pursuits, they at their leisure, plucked a wreath from the Poet, the Musician, the Sculptor, the Architect, the Scholar, and the Statesman, and often, as a relaxation from the toils of the pencil, rivalled those characters in their most laborious exertions.

Enlarging farther, view the vigorous tide
 Impetuous rush, or smoothly graceful glide ;
 Collect from tributary streams their stores,
 Roll its rich wave, and wind its shelving shores ;
 Till deepening, swelling, foaming, full and strong 135
 The bold, resistless torrent sweeps along.

No more let Ignorance presumptuous claim
 The prize of glory in the painter's name,
 By manual toil alone, in every part,
 Degrading Nature, and abusing Art : 140
 Till Science beaming o'er the soul dispense
 Her purest ray, and ripen every sense,
 Till each high faculty of thought expand,
 And the stored head direct the practised hand,
 In vain the plodding, cold mechanic tries, 145
 To gain, by drudging diligence, the skies,
 The mind's a callow bird, for flight unfit,
 Till learning's feathers plume the wing of Wit.

Line 148. *Till learning's feathers plume the wing of Wit.*]

—By the word *learning* in this place, the Author means knowledge generally ; for however graceful as an accomplishment, and gratifying as a source of literary delight, an acquaintance with the dead languages may be, it cannot be

Each Muse with scorn from Ignorance recedes,
And spurns the suit when 'tis Presumption pleads. 150
Taste too, dishonour'd, damns th' ignoble race
To vulgar toils, unvisited by Grace;

considered absolutely necessary, or even materially useful to the painter. As far as the classics may conduce to the acquirement of good taste in literature, and the general improvement of the mental powers, the Artist, might certainly, cultivate them with advantage; but as he has a language to learn, which bears no analogy to speech, and is much too difficult of attainment, to allow of leisure for unnecessary studies, he will find, when he has seriously set forward on the journey of Art, that an excursion to the lofty tracts of Greek and Latin, may turn out a very inconvenient digression from his professional path. His knowledge of those territories, will not enable him to find his way through the still more arduous difficulties of his proper course; and will perhaps, have cost him no small portion of that time, which might have made him acquainted with the road.

Chesterfield says, "classical knowledge, that is Greek and Latin, is absolutely necessary for every body; because every body has agreed to think and to call it so." Although this sarcastic proof of its necessity, may lead us to doubt Chesterfield's conviction of its use; yet, he says quite enough to shew, that he who is ignorant of Greek and

Bids them, content with reprobate renown,
 Still palm th' imposing copy on the town.
 Half painter; now half picture-dealer, claim 155
 From sage collectors an amphibious fame ;
 By still-life labours, low bred raptures raise,
 And in deception's wonders, plunge for praise.
 Bids them, while wit and worth neglected lie,
 Their want of talent by intrigue supply ; 160

Latin, will be thought deficient in one of the essential constituents of a liberal education.

If therefore, a proper foundation of classical instruction has been laid at school, it may not be inexpedient for the young painter, to cultivate an accomplishment to which so much importance is attached by the respectable classes of society.

He must take care however, in the pursuit of the feather, not to endanger the cap. A passage of Homer, or Horace, will be no passport to his pencil in the province of Virtù ; nor will his learning be received as an excuse, if he has neglected to acquire those powers in his art, without which, it will be impossible for him properly to express his conceptions, however exalted by genius, or refined by erudition.

Line 154. *Still palm th' imposing copy on the town.*—Walpole states, that Sanderson, in his *Graphice*, speaks of Lanire, a painter in the reign of Charles the First, “as

Still crouch to wealth and pride, wherever placed,
And creep like ivy round the trunk of Taste.
Or priests at shrines, where affectation rules,
The rites of Taste administer to fools;
And wriggling into Fashion's favour, play 165
At once the Puff, and Dangle of the day.

Although by Nature's liberal bounty bless'd,
The fire of Genius glows within the breast,
Collateral studies still must feed the flame,
That clearly burning brightens into fame. 170
Not the mere copyist of external things,
The painter touches passion's finest springs;
Pursues expression thro' the maze of mind,
And sounds the deepest hearts of human kind.
His task demands, to look thro' Nature's plan, 175
And mark each change of the chameliôn man;

being the first who passed off copies for originals, by tempering his colours with soot, and rolling them up till they cracked and contracted an air of antiquity."

This ingenious practice, is probably not unknown to the dexterity of the present day; but if the painter must bear the disgrace of its invention, the picture-dealer may boast the profit of its use.

To catch the hue of every clime and age,
The several shades of hero, saint, and sage ;
Each minor tinge of local manners trace,
And in his Art reflect our fleeting race. 180

Then, would you Painting's nobler course pursue,
And prosperous take the voyage of Virtù,
With knowledge store the mind ere you depart,
To cruise in those high latitudes of Art ;
Where unprovided, Genius still must fail, 185
Tho' gaily trimm'd, and crowding every sail.

But if, perchance, the classic page denied,
You boast no wealth from that rich source supplied,
Yet busied in the toils of Art decline,
To sink your shaft so late, in learning's mine ; 190
Lo ! each bright sage—each brilliant wit of old,
By Genius' hand reset in British gold,
O'er minds unlearn'd, emits the living flame,
The fashion alter'd, but the gem the same.

Big with the moral of each maddening age, 195
War's ruffian power, and revolution's rage,
Grave History presents her ample stores,
And man's fell passions while she paints, deplores.

But chief, where'er th' immortal Muse invites,
 Wait on her wing, and follow in her flights ; 200
 Whether aloft, the bright Mæonian star,
 Or Maro's milder lustre from afar,
 Sun of our sytem ! Milton's orb on high !
 Or Avon's comet flaming thro' the sky !
 Attract her pinion, faithful still pursue, 205
 Till each high heaven's unfolded to your view,
 Descending, as the dazzled sense requires,
 To lower regions, and to lesser fires.

Da Vinci thus, the light of science sought,
 And Art reviving, kindled as he wrought ; 210

Line 209. *Da Vinci thus, the light of science sought,*] —Leonardo da Vinci furnishes a striking example of that comprehensive genius and general accomplishment, which, in a former note, have been mentioned, as no uncommon characteristics of those who have been distinguished as eminent painters.

In his own Art, his attainments were extraordinary for his time, and such as place him in the first rank of eminence ; he was also profoundly skilled in sculpture, and architecture ; was a poet and a musician, a mathematician, a chemist, and an anatomist.

Raphael was esteemed one of the most accomplished

Thus Buonaroti rear'd his lofty name,
And great Urbino brighten'd into fame;
Rubens array'd in learning's lustre shone,
And triumph'd on his allegoric throne.

characters of his day. He was employed and distinguished as an Architect, and there exists a work of his in sculpture, which succeeded in competition with a regular professor of that art.

The excellence of Michael Angelo, in the three arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture, has been the theme of admiration in every succeeding period: he was also conspicuous for great general knowledge, a poet, a musician, and an anatomist.

Rubens seems to have been the best illustration of Johnson's definition of Genius: "a mind of great general powers capable of attaining to excellence in any path to which it might be accidentally directed." His acquirements were so extensive as to be almost incredible; in addition to his extraordinary knowledge of painting, in all its departments, and his skill as an architect, he is reported, to have been universally learned; to have spoken fluently seven languages—to have been an historian, a statesman, a musician, and a fine gentleman.

The annals of his time prove, that he was employed in negotiations of great importance; and we know, that he was sent as ambassador from the Infanta Isabella, and

Thus, graced with all that liberal studies yield, 215
 To form the powers of Genius for the field ;
 Accomplish'd Reynolds claims the Muse's praise,
 And shines, in illustration of her lays ;
 O ! proudly gifted 'mongst the graphic train,
 With equal skill to practise and explain ; 220

Philip the Fourth of Spain, to our unfortunate monarch
 Charles the First.

In enumerating the accomplishments of those who have been its ornaments, the painter has indeed cause to be proud of his profession : but if the powers of these great men are his pride, they are also his reproach, when in the mortifying comparison of his inferiority, he reflects, how unworthy he is of bearing a name which, their extraordinary achievements have rendered illustrious.

Line 221. *With equal skill to practise and explain ;*—
 Reynolds was one of the few artists in whose hand the pencil and the pen may be said, to have moved with equal grace. His Discourses are not less ornamental to the literature, than they are useful to the taste of his country ; and the writer may improve his style, as well as the painter his art, from their perusal.

As a body of precepts, illustrating and enforcing the general principles of painting, the Author, though he has presumed to dissent, in a few instances, from the opinions which they contain, conceives, that they are rational, scientific, and instructive ; neither expatiating ostentatiously

With all the traits of Truth and Taste to charm,
Pure from the pen, as from the pencil warm ;
To grasp once more the wreaths of ancient days,
And to the Painter's add the Scholar's praise !

Tho' cast by fate upon a cheerless age, 225
When sordid cares the self-swollen world engage ;

in theoretical refinements, nor contracted within the narrow limits of practical explanation.

Reynolds had seen much, and studied more than almost any artist of his time : he therefore, came amply provided to his subject—furnished with all that books or pictures could supply—learned in the theory, and mature in the practice of his Art. The occasion which called him forth, as a didactic writer, did not require that studied arrangement and systematic succession of parts, which should be observed in a regular series of lectures : his Discourses consequently, do not appear to have been composed upon any pre-conceived plan : he in each, took up the topic of Art which most impressed his mind at the moment, or appeared to be most applicable to the circumstances in which it was to be delivered ; and devoted himself rather to enlighten the taste of the Student, than to facilitate his practice.

His observations are evidently the result of reflection operating on experience ; they arise naturally in their places, and if not always new, are always applicable and ingenious.

When each sad Muse, unshelter'd, and unfed,
In drudging toils degenerates for bread ;
Yet fired with zeal to sieze th' historic prize,
He spread a plume that bore him to the skies ; 230

Though he shews that he can fathom his subject, he never labours to be deep—never struggles in the profound of philosophical disquisition, or throws up a simple thought with an air of sagacity. He is carried on by the natural flow of his matter, and rises or falls without effort or weakness.

Didactic writers in general, are more desirous to shew themselves than their subject, and labour rather to display the powers of their eloquence, than the principles of their art. The author, almost always supercedes the teacher, and where they can amuse by their wit, they are seldom solicitous to instruct by their science. Every thing therefore is pompous and exaggerated ; raised to the altitudes of affected enthusiasm, or refined in the siftings of subtle discrimination.

Like him who had been talking prose all his life without knowing it, the Student is surprised to find that which has been so simple in the practice so pompously explained : he hardly recognises the plainest principles of his art in the ostentatious garb of eloquent amplification, and would be induced to give up in despair, the pursuit of such wonderful accomplishments, if he did not reflect, that something of that which was so formidably described he had already performed.

Reynolds has steered clear of this rock : he never swells

Art's failing hopes in fearless flight renew'd,
While bigot Prejudice with wonder view'd.

To portrait giving action, ease and air,
He put the soul in full possession there :

in affected enthusiasm—never strains after far-fetched illustrations, or substitutes the husk of expression for the kernel of thought. The flowers which he strews are the growth of the soil, and denote its qualities while they adorn it. He displays no exaggerated difficulties to deter—no fantastical refinements to perplex : the merits which he describes, are not set beyond the reach of the human faculties, for he knows how to raise our admiration without depressing our hopes. He indeed, rather errs on the other side, and may perhaps, be considered as encouraging imbecility to persist in fruitless toil, by discrediting the influence of Genius and asserting the omnipotence of industry.

That there should exist a disposition to deprive Reynolds of the fame which must attach to the Author of those excellent Discourses, is perhaps, not extraordinary, when we consider the malevolence, which never fails to persecute great talents. Envy has no objection to rob, when she cannot revile her object ; and the debt which justice cannot deny, the ungenerous may refuse to pay, as long as they can excite a doubt of the claimant, or perplex the cause : but that persons professing an acquaintance with literature and Art, should allow themselves to co-operate

For tho' fantastic Fashion, in his day, 235
O'er outraged Nature held unseemly sway,
Disfiguring Beauty, and distorting Grace,
Till man out-ridiculed the monkey race ;

with such agents, is indeed surprising, and must beget a reasonable conviction of their ignorance in both.

The designs of folly and malevolence are however justly defeated, and their efforts only tend to aggrandize him whom they would depreciate. The suspicions which cannot shake the authenticity of his work, contribute to establish its reputation, and the writings of Reynolds are elevated to the highest rank of English literature, by being ascribed to the pen of Johnson or Burke.

But of the few wreaths which were not within the gigantic grasp of those great men, that, which decorates the brow of Reynolds, may perhaps, be considered the least attainable. Johnson was equally ignorant and insensible of the beauties of painting, and Burke was in Taste, the humble disciple of him, with whose honours he has been so absurdly invested. That they could have supplied the materials of those Discourses, few are so preposterous as to assert ; the plan and arrangement of the structure in which they are employed, must be considered equally out of the sphere of their competence ; for the skill which adjusts parts to parts, which determines their position, and illustrates their use ; which selects, and combines—divides and discriminates through all the complicated relations of an Art so

Beneath his eye abash'd, the monster sought
To soften each gross feature as he wrought, 240
While thro' each awkward transformation traced,
He bound the Proteus in the spells of Taste.

comprehensive as painting; can be found only in him, who is master of his subject both in theory and practice.

In the exterior decoration of the building only, could these great artificers have been employed; and it would be difficult for those who are best acquainted with their work, to point out a trace of their tool, or an ornament executed in their taste. Where shall we find in the easy unstudied flow of Reynolds, the solemn dignity of Johnson, or the splendid exuberance of Burke?—the pointed, compressed, and sonorous periods of the one, or the rich ample animated paragraphs of the other?

The pace of Johnson is a gigantic stride easily discovered amongst the steps of ordinary men. The rapid motion, and irregular vehemence of Burke, can as little be concealed amid the calmer movements of spirits less powerful and impetuous. The subject of Reynolds, could have derived no light from the genius of those great characters, and his style would have been crushed beneath the ponderous magnificence of the one, or overwhelmed by the rhetorical torrent of the other.

To those who were acquainted with Reynolds, the internal evidence of his Discourses will always be a sufficient

Pride of his time ! in painting's low decay,
His Genius rising still prolong'd the day,
Beam'd o'er the darken'd scene of Art, and shed 245
A needful glory round Britannia's head :
For long enshrouded in the night of Taste,
Remote and rude, a mere commercial waste,

proof of their authenticity : they bear the most unequivocal marks of their Author : they are characteristic of his mind, his manners, and his conversation. Easy, equable, and unaffected : decisive as becomes the preceptor, but not dictatorial as a pedagogue. Distinguished by persuasive simplicity, rather than impressive strength ; often elegant, occasionally adorned, and generally judicious.

That he availed himself of the friendship, and solicited the criticism of the two great characters above mentioned, may be readily believed ; for who would not have been proud to have his thoughts revised by their Taste, or enriched by their erudition ? Such corrections as to style, as he might have honourably received ; such, as under similar circumstances, any other writer would have been pleased to obtain, and their more practised habits of the pen could have afforded, were assuredly not slighted by his good sense, nor withheld by their liberality. They have probably in some instances sharpened a point, polished a period, or suggested an illustration. Johnson and Burke may have occasionally placed a spangle, but the rich brocade has evidently been wrought in the loom of Reynolds.

She lay obscure, in Europe's scornful eye,
Convicted of a cold and cloudy sky ; 250
Till Reynolds poured his lustre, and display'd
Her cliffs refulgent rising from the shade.

Tho' long the sceptre of his Art he held,
And justly sway'd where he so much excell'd,
No vain pretender of his time was known 255
To doubt his title, or dispute his throne ;
So bright his merits in their eyes appear'd,
E'en they who best could rival, most revered.
The school he form'd, their founder's taste sustain,
And triumph in the trophies of his reign ; 260
Like feudal lords, our minor rights we claim,
But join in homage to his higher fame ;
Confess our vassalage of Art, and prove
The sov'reign's glory, in the subjects' love.
In him ambition's purest passion glow'd, 265
And sought no wreaths but those good sense bestow'd ;
He scorn'd the poor, stale artifice that lays
The trap of eccentricity for praise ;
The quack's credentials still where dulness rules !
The coxcomb's bait to catch the fry of fools ! 270
With candour fraught, yet free without offence,
The mildest manners, and the strongest sense ;

The best example, and the brightest rule,
His life a lesson, and his art a school,
Behold him run his radiant course, and claim 275
Thro' half an age an undisputed fame !
Still to the last, maintain his proudest height,
Nor drop one feather in so bold a flight.
But Fate at length, with darker aspect frown'd,
And sent a shaft that brought him to the ground ; 280
Struck at the joy congenial to his heart,
And shut him out the paradise of Art :*
Obscured at length the sky so long serene,
And cast in shades of night his closing scene.

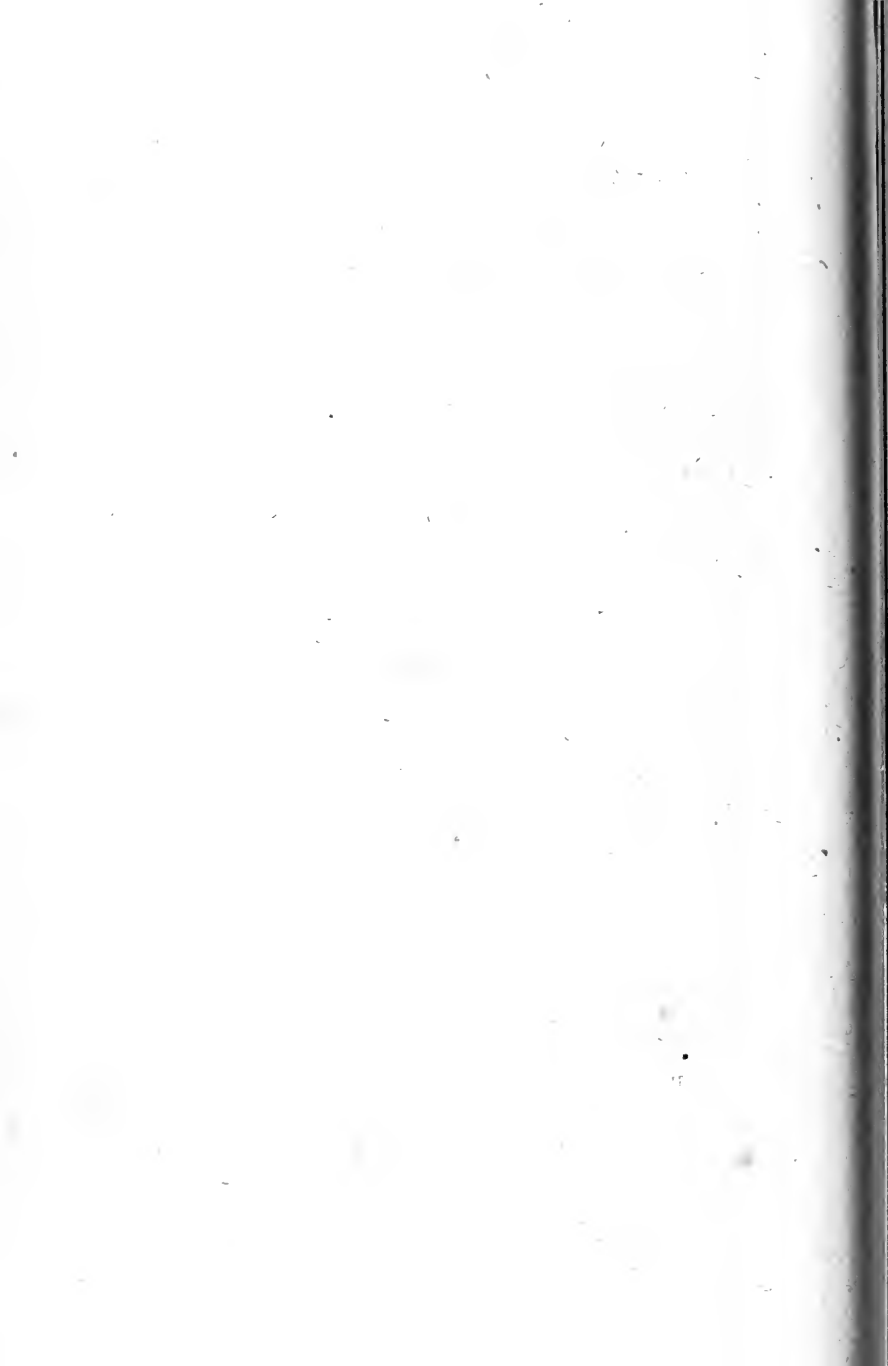
In Leo thus, when Sol refulgent reigns, 285
And Summer fervours scorch the panting plains ;
Nor mists appear, nor exhalations rise,
To dull the dazzling radiance of the skies,
Till downward verging in his course divine,
A milder lustre marks the day's decline, 290
Ascending slow, an earthy vapour shrouds
His parting splendours, and he sets in clouds.

* Alluding to the loss of sight which Sir Joshua Reynolds experienced a short time before his death, and which was supposed to have hastened that event, by excluding him from the gratification which he always appeared to derive from the practice of his profession.

CANTO FIFTH.

ARGUMENT.

Allusion to the object proposed in the preceding parts of the work—reference to the Discourses of Reynolds, and the Lectures of Fuzeli and Opie, as occupied with the higher department of precept—continuation of the poem for the purpose of pointing out some of those defects in painting, which operate to countenance the critic in his contempt for modern art—first, Manner, with the disadvantages that result from it—folly of those who affect to disregard the merits of imitation illustrated in the character of Aristo—the mechanics of the pencil who pride themselves on dexterity of hand—the triflers in Taste exemplified in the character of Curioso—affectation of travelled Artists, satirised in the character of Balbuto—the process hunter of the palette in that of Parthenius—the Student cautioned to beware of those who lose their time and talent in pursuit of nostrums and secrets—instructed to hope for eminence in art only through the operation of regular study, industry, and good sense—warned to avoid the glittering gaudy style which is too often resorted to for the purposes of exhibition allurements—defects arising from a theatrical taste in Art—error of those who place so much stress on the merits of facility pointed out in the character of Presto—the Student cautioned to avoid the folly of those who affect a premature spirit of execution, who think diligence dullness, and mistake extravagance for genius—defects resulting from the opposite extreme of practice—the minutiae mongers who imitate the laboured littleness of Dow and Denner—advantages which result from patient industry, and occasionally, from the suggestions of happy accident—faults which arise even from the merits of Art when carried to excess, traced in the various qualities of design, colouring, chiaro 'scuro, and execution.



CANTO V.



Admonere volumus, non mordere : prodesse, non lædere.

ERASMUS.

THUS far, the Muse advent'rous, to display
 The Student's course, has dared a lengthen'd lay,
 Content, in humbler tracks of toil to lead
 The tyro's step, and stimulate his speed;
 To abler pens—to higher powers of Art, 5
 She leaves the lofty precept to impart,
 Which erst, in Reynolds' glowing periods graced,
 Diffused new light thro' all the realms of taste;
 Which Fuzeli, with classic force impress'd,
 To fire the Poet in the Painter's breast; 10
 And late from Opie, roused the public ear,
 Till death arresting check'd his proud career

Yet zealous still, she would the strain prolong,
To mark some errors ere she close her song,
Some bolder faults, that critic foes inflame, 15
And prompt them, willing to withhold our fame;

Line 11. *Which late from Opie roused the public ear,*]—
By the death of Opie, the British School of Art has suffered a loss, which will not perhaps, be readily supplied. In whatever light we consider him, whether as a man, an Artist, or an Academician; as a painter, a writer, or a reasoner, there was a character of originality—a peculiar strength about him, which always excited, and often rewarded attention.

Bursting at once from provincial seclusion into all the glare of metropolitan publicity, he may be said to have commenced his career under unfavourable circumstances; for he was looked upon as a wonder—was followed for a time, by fashion and affectation, with premature celebrity, and left, at the moment when he began to be worthy of the public favour, to meditate upon its instability.

Prodigies are always over-rated, and often ruined, by their injudicious admirers: but Opie had too much sense to be spoiled by flattery, and too much spirit to be depressed by neglect: he converted his leisure to his improvement; his genius rose when it was rescued from the crowd; and though he ceased to be considered as a phenomenon, by flatterers and fools, he forced his way to a more rational and durable reputation, by vigorous efforts in the

Which lure from truth, lay proudest talents waste,
And taint the purity of public Taste.

As moralists more epidemic deem
The vices which the most like virtues seem, 20

higher province of his art; and the sober estimate of Taste placed him in the first rank of his profession.

Emerging from an humble sphere by his own strength, and uninfluenced by those predisposing impressions, which generally result from the regular discipline of the faculties according to the forms of systematic instruction, his mind was stamped with a character of intrepid curiosity, of unyielding independence, from which, perhaps, his most conspicuous merits were derived.

Self-taught in every thing, he took his own road to what he acquired, and if it was not always the shortest and the best, it occasionally offered to him views of his object, which rarely present themselves to those who travel in the beaten path. His art was more the result of his own observation—more independent of his predecessors, than that of any other Artist of his time. What he possessed, he appeared to draw directly from Nature, seldom admitting the intermediate agency of her established favourites, and trusting boldly to the influence of his own powers. In direct intercourse with her, he was always respectable and often excellent; but he seemed neither inclined, nor qualified, to

So, those defects in Art, more fatal sway,
That wear the mask of merit to betray :

avail himself of the labours of those, from whom he might have learned to unite the taste of selection to the power of imitation.

In some parts of his Art, he rose to great eminence : in the powerful relief of his object he may be said to vie with Rembrandt, Carravaggio, and Velasquez. Sometimes perhaps, this praise was obtained at the expense of merits more estimable ; but in characters of age, and strong expression, where vigour of effect is peculiarly appropriate, he carried it to a degree of projection, which, if it has been equalled, has certainly, never been surpassed.

In that particular quality of colouring called tone, he was also, at one period of his practice, conspicuously skilled ; the death of James the Sixth of Scotland, and some of his pictures painted for the Shakespeare Gallery, displayed a depth, and richness of hue, which are not always to be found in his subsequent works. The desire of freshness and purity of tint, much influenced his pencil in the latter period of his life, and sometimes, occasioned a crude and chalky effect of colouring, which impaired the general impression of his merits.

His manner was broad, bold, and original ; pursuing truth without prejudice, but generally without choice ; faithful, but not minute in imitation ; always forcible in effect, but often feeble in design.

As a man, he was respectable, and respected : rather

Which make a shew of skill, to strike secure,
Specious and false—imposing and impure.

unprepossessing in his appearance, but highly interesting in his mind. Of a free and independent spirit; easy though not polished in his deportment: advancing his claims without arrogance, and recommending them without servility. With a dignified disdain of artifice, he refused to trick himself out in the airs of eccentricity; or to prop up his reputation, by the common resources of the coxcomb and the quack. No man ever had less of the actor in his manners, or the impostor in his Art.

He contended with his rivals in open, honourable, warfare—sought no unfair advantage—planned no manœuvres of policy or surprise upon his competitors; employed no stage trick to catch the public attention, and make himself the principal figure in the scene. The notice, which his pencil could not command, he scorned to procure by any other means; and no Artist of his time, can boast a reputation more legitimately established, or less indebted to policy, to party, or intrigue.

A short time before his death, he was appointed to the Professor's chair of painting, in the Royal Academy; and if he had lived, to digest and complete his course of Lectures in that establishment, his profession would have derived instruction and delight from his unhesitating boldness of investigation—his originality of remark, and ingenuity of argument. He was one of the few characters which are to

Chief, then of *manner*, as a pest, beware, 25
The thoughtless Student's most delusive snare ;
A subtle vice, that saps by slow degrees,
The pencil's frenzy, and the art's disease ;

be met with in society, who see with their own eyes, and hear with their own ears. Untutored in the awe of authority, a name had no influence upon him when opposed to an argument. He was no venerator of time, nor respecter of prejudice : he was an original thinker, whose mind rushed fearlessly forward in search of truth, wherever it seemed likely to be found ; and if the peculiarity of his opinions, sometimes excited surprise and provoked opposition, the ingenuity with which they were maintained, seldom failed, to shew great vigour of thought, and singular acuteness of observation.

Those who lived in habits of intimacy with Opie, will cherish his memory with kindness ; they will look back with pleasure, to those hours, that were cheered by his pleasantry, or enlightened by his information. As a companion he was recommended by good spirits, good sense, and good temper ; and if his conversation was not always brilliant, or instructive, it was almost always stimulating and agreeable : rarely trite, even when most trifling ; never degraded to common-place insipidity, nor malignant even when most severe. When he became familiar and found himself at his ease, his humour frequently kindled into wit ;

Of quick contagion, as of tardy cure,
Nor time can sanction it, nor taste endure. 30

With powers perverted, vulgar, vain, and cold,
The self-admiring mannerist behold !

and though he was as fond of disputation, as he was forcible in argument, he seemed always, as willing to sport with the playful, as to speculate with the profound.

He was a rough gem of genius, which when rubbed in the collision of life, always brightened into lustre, and betrayed its internal richness through the disadvantage of partial incrustation.

Line 25. *Chief, then of manner, as a pest, beware,*—
Manner, in painting, is more easily discovered than defined ; considered as relating only to execution, it is a peculiarity of handling produced by a premature facility of pencil and a false conception of merit, which communicates to every object, an insipid sameness of character, as inconsistent with truth, as variety. It is the genuine stamp of meretricious feeling : the established brand of bad taste. It is the triumph of the mechanic over the artist : the darling vice of vulgar ability ; to which are sacrificed, the hopes of industry and the health of Art.

The influence of Manner however, is not confined to mere execution ; it affects the mind, as well as the hand of the Artist, and there is no quality of painting which may not be depraved by its means. Thus, Michael Angelo

In all the pride of penciling, impart
His want of nature, and his waste of art :
The scribe's poor merit still his best pretence, 35
He triumphs in the flourish, not the sence :

may be said to be, in some measure, a mannerist in form, and Rubens in character ; Guercino in colouring, and Guido in grace. Many other examples will occur to those who are much conversant in the works of the old masters. There is perhaps no Artist who in every part of his Art is quite free from manner, for it is almost impossible, in a pursuit which unites the whole force of the human faculties, intellectual and mechanical, to avoid recurring occasionally, to the same path of practice, or the same train of thought. Of the vices which result from it, we may therefore say that “ *optimus ille est qui minimis urgetur.*”

Neither are the evils of manner peculiar to the arts of design ; music, poetry, and prose, are often found to furnish examples of their influence, and the ancients, as well as the moderns, may be cited in illustration. The style of Seneca has been observed to be infected by manner, and perhaps the periods of Cicero are not quite free from taint. It occasionally stiffens the poetical pace of Milton, and sometimes vibrates in the versification of Pope. Of the poets, who have been distinguished for the greatest command of their tools, Dryden had certainly the least, and Darwin, may perhaps, be said to have the most of it : it is never seen in Addison, nor suspected in Hume : it

Thro' all his works one fav'rite system sways,
One touch attends him, and one tone betrays.
His soul no emulative ardour fires,
No lofty sense of excellence inspires ;

40

is almost admired, in the polished splendours of Gibbon ;
and almost illustrious, in the measured majesty of Johnson.

In music, if the Author did not fear to outrage the enthusiastic devotion of the day, he would be tempted to hint that Handel was a mannerist : if he might presume to give an opinion, he would say, that, compared to the Italian School, Handel was in music, what Holbein was in painting ; a genius of great original powers, conspicuous in his time, and qualified to seize on the stronger features of expression ; but somewhat hard and dry, in the application of his Art ; without any extraordinary delicacy of Taste, or variety of science. But the "Giant Handel" has long been the god of our idolatry in this country, and he who ventures to doubt his divinity, will not much recommend his discretion : the works of some eminent modern composers, have however tended considerably to shake our prejudices on this subject, and our cathedral Taste begins to give way, before the richness, vigour and variety of Haydn, and the fancy, feeling, and animation of Mozart.

Manner, however, is perhaps, in painting, more fatal and offensive than in any other Art, and is therefore, more cautiously to be avoided. It often seduces inexperience, and always satisfies vanity. It bears an appearance of

In trite routine, by knack, from Nature led,
The plodding hand still supersedes the head ;
Pleased, in the present toil reflects the past,
And stamps the next dull ditto of the last.
Be this his praise, who thus his Art degrades, 45
A good mechanic in the worst of trades.

Where'er the pencil ostentatious plays,
And *Touch* obtrusive claims the critic's praise,

facility, which captivates those, who find the management of the pencil difficult ; and it carries an air of power, which flatters the feebleness of those, who have more dexterity than strength. He who falls into manner, has got a receipt for making pictures, which even if his Taste should reform, his indolence will not readily resign, since it affords a mechanical substitute for skill, which saves at once, the toil of imitation, and supersedes the necessity of thought.

What the mannerist can do, he always does with ease ; and what is done with ease, he is willing to suppose well done. There is a flourish about him which seems to bespeak the master, and a certainty that appears to be the result of science. He deceives himself therefore, more than he deceives others, till at length, turning wholly from Nature and Truth, he Narcissus-like, admires himself in the stream of his own Art, and falls a victim to vanity and delusion.

Nature and Truth their chaster charms refuse,
 And Taste the vain parade contemptuous views. 50
 Judicious Feeling will not here offend,
 But hold the means subservient to the end,
 Repress the prurient pencil, and subdue
 The glittering palette to a graver hue.
 Wrapp'd in his part, the skilful actor feels 55
 He plays it best, when he himself conceals.

Some lofty fools, of fancied science vain,
 The pencil's aid, as handicraft, disdain;
 To clothe their high conceptions, scarce submit,
 And claim the careless privilege of wit : 60

Line 59. *To clothe their high conceptions, scarce submit.*]
 —There are two great sects in Art, the members of which
 pursue their ends by opposite means; maintain their re-
 spective principles with equal zeal, and often indulge, like
 other sectaries, in the expression of mutual contempt and
 reprobation. Of these, the one may be termed *idealists*,
 the other *naturalists*. The former reject imitation entirely,
 as a degrading misapplication of the pencil; the latter,
 wholly depend upon it, as the only means of merit and
 success. The idealist consults only the model in his
 mind; and triumphs in the dignified pursuit of the poeti-
 cal and the sublime. The naturalist copies closely the

Aristo, with triumphant sneer, assails
The patient tribe who plod in dull details,
Who poorly still to please the eye aspire,
And see in Nature something to admire :

model in his eye, and congratulates himself on the possession of Truth and Nature. The school of Michael Angelo will furnish sufficient examples of the one, the school of Rembrandt abounds with examples of the other.

These may be considered the extremes of Taste, and are consequently, at an equal distance from the middle point, where only the perfection of Art is to be found. He conceives his subject well to no purpose, who expresses it badly ; and he who conceives his subject badly, will imitate his models in vain. The orator who neglects the graces of language and delivery, will make but little impression, and find, that sense without fluency, is as inefficient, as fluency without sense.

The painter and the poet of the present day, who confiding in the sublimity of their conceptions, and the elevation of their views, shall disdain to cultivate the humbler graces and decorations, which are appropriate to their respective Arts, will be left to the undisturbed enjoyment of their imaginary pre-eminence, and suffered to pile up their productions in the dusty dignity of the shew-room and the bookseller's shop.

In painting, indeed, above all arts, the study of those qualities which contribute to set off our thoughts to the

To strike the mind, is his superior part, 65
Inspired with all the poetry of Art !
He scorns to court the pamper'd sense, or raise
The vulgar tribute of plebeian praise ;

best advantage, is an essential duty. The eye is a fastidious sense, and turns easily from what it dislikes : the painter who prides himself on addressing the mind, should recollect, that he can gain admission there only by this entrance, and it will be in vain to urge his pretensions, or talk of his powers, if he appears without the proper passport.

But sometimes, when we cannot make our practice conformable to our principles, we endeavour to make our principles conformable to our practice. Thus, they, who in the attainment of other merits, have neglected the study of *chiaro'scuro*, colouring, and execution, ingeniously promulgate a law, by which, their deficiency is not only excused, but applauded, and the defect of their necessity is converted into a beauty of choice. We therefore, hear frequently, of "an historical style of colouring," of a "severity of style suited to the grand character of Art," and of the propriety of disregarding those minor merits of imitation, which according to this convenient canon of criticism, are not only unnecessary, but injurious to the higher qualities of Taste.

As far as the Author understands this doctrine, he dissents from it : he knows of no standard by which the

He's all ideal, abstract, and sublime,
He generalizes passion, place, and time ;
No aid from awkward Nature he requires,
At Fancy's magic lamp he lights his fires,

70

works of Art can be judged, but the standard of Nature ; and he conceives, that there is no rational principle, which can authorise us to consider as inappropriate or injudicious in those works, the perfection of any quality, which she has essentially connected with the character and beauty of her productions.

Every scene, natural or imitated, is made up of form, colour, and light ; however expressed under the various modifications of action and passion, of hue and reflection, of light and of shade. These are the elements of every picture which is presented to our eye, by the hand of Nature, or of Art, and according to their purity and perfection we are pleased. The most perfect picture must necessarily be that, in which all those elements combine and co-operate, each to its peculiar end : to maintain that the effect of the whole may be improved by the imperfection of any of the parts, is to contradict the consistency of Nature, the general harmony of things, and the general experience of Science.

But it is said, the qualities of colouring and *chiaro'scuro*, are so predominant and attractive, that where displayed in full force, they seduce our attention from the higher beauties of Taste, and therefore, their influence, should be

And thinks wild dreams, in rudest scramble shewn,
The want of every finish'd grace atone.
But noblest thoughts, the dress of Taste demand, 75
To strike impressive from the painter's hand :

studiously diminished, by abating their allurements, when the more chaste and intellectual merits of Art are intended to be expressed. Little however, appears to be gained by this reasoning; for the ill consequence supposed, can result only from the misapplication or abuse of those captivating qualities. Every scene and subject has its appropriate character of light and colour, as well as of form and action; and when this character is judiciously preserved, the utmost effort of skill may be employed upon it, not only without injury, but with material advantage.

It would not be more absurd, than unnatural, to represent a funeral with all the glare of a wedding; or to bestow the bloom of health and joy, on the fading face of care and sorrow. It would be ridiculous to light an assassination by the splendour of noon day, or to exhibit the magnificence of a feast, in the gloom of a dungeon. The St. Peter Martyr of Titian, and the Marriage of Cana by Paul Veronese, present opposite characters of colouring and *chiaro 'scuro*, yet the highest excellence of these qualities, is to be found in each, according to the nature of the subject, and suited to the gaiety or the gravity of the scene.

The features of a Medea meditating the murder of her children, are not to be invested with the "purple light of

Gold may be valued in the ore or mine,
But 'tis the stamp that makes it current coin;
Poets and Painters, close allied in Art,
Must thro' the outwork senses win the heart, 80

love," or the roseate hue of an Hebe: not because the beauty of such colouring, would divert the eye from the terrific expression intended to be conveyed; but because such blooms, are not in nature, connected with the appearance of those passions, which the face of Medea, at such a moment, should express; but the sallow aspect of fury and revenge, the haggard hue of sorrow and desperation, should not be degraded to the tawny tint of a drum head, or the dusky brown of a mulatto. They furnish opportunities for the exercise of discriminating skill in the colourist, which call forth his best exertions, and when successfully represented, shew a refinement of feeling and science, often superior to that which is required to display the more florid effects of health and beauty.

From the great stores of Nature, the judicious painter, under the guidance of propriety, will select his models in this, as well as in every other department of his Art; but when they are judiciously chosen, they cannot be too well imitated. The intellectual Artist need not fear to indulge his pencil in the display of those subordinate graces; he may give a loose to all the powers of a Titian, and be satisfied, that if he has sense to apply them properly, they will not detract from the sublimity of his conceptions or

For eye and ear provide the proper charm,
And ere they gain the fort, the guard disarm.

If some, thro' pride, from painting thus have stray'd,
A meaner tribe mistake it for a trade,

the value of his design. A hero of flesh and blood will be as effective an agent in his hands, as a hero of brick, or stone, or wood, or leather. But let him not imagine when he has coloured his men like mahogany, and his women like gypsies ; when he has displayed ;

“ No light, but rather darkness visible,

“ Serving to discover sights of woe,”

let him not imagine that he has effected “ an historical colouring, peculiarly adapted to elevated subjects,” nor flatter his skilfulness by supposing it conformable to that “ severity of style suited to the grand character of Art.”

There is no subject in which an able painter may not shew with advantage his skill in colouring, chiaro 'scuro, and execution ; not by repressing, but by producing the perfection of these qualities. The noblest conceptions of grandeur and sublimity, may be accommodated with their appropriate beauty, from these sources as well as the most light and airy compositions of ordinary and familiar life.

They who defend the unskilful colouring of Poussin and the Roman School, as suited to the grand and sublime character of Art, might as well say, that the effects of pity and

Low praise for mere dexterity demand, 85
And juggler like, exult in sleight of hand ;
The Painter's tricks, like Breslaw's, may amuse
The Tyro train, and vulgar eyes abuse,

terror would be heightened on the stage, if the actors were to tinge their faces with brick dust, and exhibit their scenes by the ray of a rush-light.

The Author must not omit to state however, (though conscious how much it must weaken the effect of his reasoning) that the principle which he has above attempted to controvert, has found an advocate in Reynolds—in Reynolds! from whose works may be selected, examples of excellence in colouring, effect and execution, which are suited to the noblest conceptions of the Art.

The following passage, occurs in a note to Mason's translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting. "In *heroic* subjects it will not I hope appear too great a refinement of criticism to say, that the want of naturalness or deception of the Art, which give to an inferior style its whole value, is no material disadvantage. The Hours, for instance, as represented by Julio Romano, giving provender to the horses of the Sun, would not strike the imagination more forcibly, from their being coloured with the pencil of Rubens, though he would have represented them more naturally, but might he not by that very act, have brought them down from the celestial state to the rank of mere terrestrial animals?"

It will be perceived, that the doctrine advanced in this

But Taste and Science soon the cheat proclaim,
And put the palette-conjuror to shame. 90

Some, idly curious, plunge in pedant lore,
And pleased, the "palpable obscure" explore ;

note is so cautiously stated, under the "hope of its not being deemed too great a refinement of criticism," as to excite a suspicion that Reynolds himself, was not quite convinced by his own reasoning.

If by "naturalness or deception of the Art," the annotator intended to describe that *fac-simile servility*—that vulgar imitation, which instead of the character which ought to be expressed, gives you the portrait of the model who chanced to be made use of by the painter, there would be no ground for dispute ; but the example by which Reynolds has illustrated his position, proves it to have a meaning more extended.

Julio Romano was one of the weakest, and Rubens was one of the most powerful colourists ; it is evident therefore, that by contrasting them on this occasion, the writer wished to inculcate that the inferior colouring of the former, is more appropriate to the subject above-mentioned, and by inference, to all *heroic* subjects, than the superior colouring of the latter ; in other words, that a painter who had no skill in this department of the Art, coloured *heroic* subjects in a manner more appropriate, that is, better, than

Deep learn'd in graphic gossipings of old,
 The pencil's private history they unfold ;
 From Pliny, down to Pilkington have traced, 95
 The critic's progress thro' the maze of Taste ;

a painter who possessed a great deal. It must be observed, that form and character are out of the question, as it is in the colouring of his work that Julio is here preferred to Rubens. The illustration indeed, appears to be very un-luckily selected; for, if there is one subject, which more than another, not only admits, but demands the powers of a great colourist, the Author conceives, it is "the Hours giving provender to the horses of the Sun:" here, surely, the peculiar splendours of Rubens might be employed with advantage—the richest treasures of his palette might be consistently displayed.

But it is said, that by representing the Hours more *naturally* he might "bring them down from their *celestial state* to the rank of mere *terrestrial animals*." The word *naturally* is here rather vague; if it is meant to say, that Rubens, by colouring the Hours, with that splendour and beauty of which his pencil was capable, would "bring them down from the celestial state," in which the inferior colouring of Romano had placed them, the Author can neither conceive, nor admit such a consequence.

We can form no idea of a celestial state, or celestial natures, but by representing to our minds, the highest possible perfection of sublunary things and human quali-

Where deep sagacity delighted proves,
 How merit's orb grows bright as it removes ;
 That little we to living worth should trust,
 And honour Genius—only in the dust. 100

In anecdotes of Art Curioso deals,
 And careful treasures all that Time reveals ;

ties : divinities of our creating are only superior men : a heaven of our formation is only a happier earth : no exertion enables us to soar beyond ourselves, or rise above the scene which we inhabit. When the painter therefore, would represent a superior or celestial being, he can do it only by expressing human qualities in their highest perfection. Now, as colour is a constituent of human beauty, as well as form, or expression, the Author conceives, the utmost possible perfection of that quality, to be not only consistent with, but essential to our most complete idea of a celestial being. As, from the restricted nature of our conceptions, an ethereal personage from our hands, must be formed of flesh and blood ; the more perfect and beautiful those indispensable properties of our humble divinities can be made, the more appropriate must they be considered to that elevation of character which we are desirous to express.

The colouring of Rubens therefore, approaching to perfection much nearer than that of Romano, would not, the

Sharp as a sportsman, keeps the game in view,
 And hunts the closest coverts of Virtù ;
 Nay, sounds tradition's depths for what survives, 105
 And with a commentator's keenness dives;
 How Titian held his pencil—what his ground,
 Or white, or black—his palette square, or round,
 If Vandyke at his easle, sate or stood,
 Or used blue black, or glazed with dragon's blood ; 110
 Just how much light thro' Rembrandt's wall convey'd,
 From north or south admitted—sun or shade ;
 Could he but know ! thus lifted from the crowd,
 The man were happy, and the painter proud.

But lo ! with all Italia's honours graced, 115
 The travell'd Artist from the tour of Taste,

Author conceives, “ have brought down the Hours from
 their celestial state to the rank of mere terrestrial animals ;”
 but, on the contrary, as far as colouring is concerned, must
 have tended to raise them to a higher heaven than the in-
 ferior skill of Romano in this respect, has been able to
 attain.

They who have excelled in subjects of a grand and ele-
 vated character, have rarely been able to combine with
 their other accomplishments, the merits of colouring, *chiaro*
'scuro, and execution ; but let us not therefore, contract

Triumphant comes, in conscious pride to raise.
 Our vulgar wonder, and unvalued praise.
 Painters and critics lacker'd o'er at Rome,
 In gloss of Taste are sure to shine at home ; 120

our ideas of excellence, in compliment to their deficiencies, nor endeavour to persuade ourselves, that we see in the imperfection of their Art, a principle of their science.

Line 119. *Painters and critics lacker'd o'er at Rome,*]—
 The vanity which results from a visit to the Vatican, is not confined to critics ; the painter is sometimes found to have his full share of it, and it is in him the less excusable, as more knowledge should make him more modest, and experience might convince him, that in matters of taste, affectation is as truly ridiculous, as it is easily exposed.

But he who cannot take pride in what he has done, will endeavour to be proud of what he has seen ; and will absurdly suppose himself recommended to our esteem, by the impertinent enumeration of opportunities which he has neglected, and advantages of which he has been insensible.

To have seen every thing, and to have done nothing, is a source of mortification rather than a subject of vanity : to have possessed all the means, without obtaining the ends of study, argues a want of industry or talent, which leaves indolence and imbecility without excuse or consolation.

He who visits Rome without becoming a connoisseur, must have much more, or much less sense than falls to the lot of most travellers : the temptation is too strong for or-

On Tiber's banks have they but pass'd a week?
 They ever after rave of the antique,
 In loud delirium Nature's charms disown,
 And like Pigmalion, fall in love with stone.
 Blockheads or boors abroad, pass current here 125
 As connoisseurs, and all the vain revere.
 Couch'd for the cataract of taste, their eyes
 No more our coarse unpolish'd merits prize;
 Or should perchance, some awkward effort raise,
 A gracious smile, they pity while they praise. 130

Balbuto prates in flippant phrase of Art,
 Knows every hand—has every name by heart;

dinary faculties. It is impossible to live, even for a short time, amongst antiques, cameos and intaglios—surrounded by Cognoscenti and Ciceroni, without experiencing some stirrings of ambition—some heaving hopes of dilettanti fame. Italy has long been the great market of Virtù, from which all the other countries of Europe have been supplied: the raw materials of criticism are there in such abundance, that all those are sure to ballast with Taste, who cannot load with knowledge. But however our native Arts may suffer by this species of importation, the worst enemy to their interests, is to be found amongst those disappointed votaries of the pencil, who having travelled without talent, have

View'd in the Vatican the Pope at prayer,
And counted all the priests and pictures there ;
Has traversed temples, theatres, and halls, 135
And wept o'er fading frescos on their walls ;
Nay peep'd into Pompeii, 'tis averr'd,
And witness'd all the wonders there interr'd,
Nor fail'd, while pensive 'midst the shatter'd store,
To find some fragments for his native shore, 140
Some precious relics from the wreck of Rome,
To soothe the cognoscenti rage at home.
Of picture history too, his head's a hoard,
Beyond a dealer's erudition stored ;
Familiar with each cabinet of note, 145
There's not a catalogue but he can quote !
Could shew the nail on which hung each chef d'oeuvre,
Now placed with Europe's plunder in the Louvre :
The antiquarian to the artist joins,
The very oracle of gems and coins ! 150

returned without merit ; who officiate as the prime agents of artifice, and the ready panders of vanity ; who flattering all the prejudices, and feeding all the follies of Taste, contribute to discredit the ability which they cannot approach, and endeavour to reinforce the feebleness of the Artist by the quackeries of the Cicerone.

In short, no pen such merits can impart,
 Balbuto's skill'd in all things—but his Art;
 Yet hear his words! you'll swear Apelles speaks,
 Inspired with all the science of the Greeks;
 Or Titian's self, dispatched from heav'n in haste, 155
 To shew his *secret* to the world of Taste.
 His works indeed, a different story tell,
 And prove 'tis not by talking we excel.*

How many fondly waste the studious hour,
 To seek in process, what they want in power! 160
 Their time in curious search of colours lose,
 Which, when they find, they want the skill to use!
 Till all in gums engross'd, macgilps and oils,
 The painter sinks amid the chemist's toils.

Line 164. *The painter sinks amid the chemist's toils.*]—
 The folly here noticed, is too prevalent amongst us, and
 should be discountenanced, as equally delusive and dangerous.
 The process-hunter in painting is the alchemist of the palette;
 whose imagination riots in the hope of discoveries,
 which are to abridge the labours of industry, and

* Dispositumque typum non lingua pinxit Apelles.

FRESNOY.

Parthennius thinks in Reynolds' steps he treads, 165
And every day a different palette spreads ;
Now bright in vegetable bloom he glows,
His white—the lily, and his red—the rose ;

reward the sagacity of science. Undepressed by disappointment, he persists, in spite of experience, and dissipates that time and talent in the crucible of experiment, which, if more reasonably employed, would have enabled him to obtain his object by ordinary means and known materials. The Artist who has been once visited by this mania, is restored with great difficulty to the rational path of practice. As in most other insanities, the cure is never complete. There is always a disposition to relapse, whenever any little occurrence of Art, or accident of execution, supplies a new gleam of hope, or suggests a new hint for experiment and expectation.

From this disease the good sense of Reynolds did not entirely secure him ; but the vigour of his genius sustained him where weaker powers would have been exhausted or destroyed. The fluctuation of his style, and the fugitive character of his colouring, which have been observed at some particular periods of his practice, are however, attributable to this cause. But though he sought assistance from process, Reynolds never depended upon it : his most faded works display a delicacy and refinement of hue, which

But soon aghast, amid his transient hues,
The ghost of his departed picture views : 170
Now burning minerals, fossils, bricks and bones,
He seeks more durable in dusky tones,

prove the value of what has been lost, by the worth of that which remains.

“ The light of science leaves behind a ray,

“ That beams through time, and beautifies decay.”

It may be said of Reynolds, that the ghost of his departed Art is better than the flesh and blood of ordinary men.

The Author would be sorry to discourage the Student in any pursuit that tends to make him master of his tools, or acquainted with his materials. As every thing in painting is effected by means of colours, it is proper, that the qualities of those agents should be investigated, and their powers ascertained : but it is as dangerous to over-rate this knowledge, as to neglect it ; for the practice of their application, is worth more than the theory of their nature. The one is useful, but the other is essential ; and he who has painted one picture, has gained more of the knowledge which is necessary to his Art, than he who has analyzed all the colours of the palette.

Mechanical modes of operation are certainly very important to the painter ; they exist however, in all the varieties of local and individual practice ; according to school and skill. And as it is evident that some of these modes must be superior to others, a desire to discover

And triumphs in such permanence of dye,
That all seems fix'd, which Taste would wish to fly.
Now oil's in favour—varnish now's the rage, 175
Together blended now they both engage;

the best, is not only natural, but laudable. It is only, when this desire is indulged to excess, that it becomes dangerous; when the experimental propensity, is allowed to assume the character of habit, and the authority of science.

When the painter begins to depend upon his system rather than his strength; when he trusts to the qualities of his ground, or the virtues of his vehicle, for the attainment of that excellence, which may be extracted from the most common materials by the process of feeling and taste, there is reason to fear, that the disorder is fast approaching to a height, which no course of criticism, no medicine of common sense can be expected to subdue.

Experience proves, that the beauties of colouring are to be found by genius and industry in almost every system: they depend more on the eye and the hand, than the palette or the process: they are to be discovered not only in the practice of Titian, but in that of Correggio, of Rubens, of Rembrandt, and of Reynolds. And although in general, the merits of the first of these great Artists are to be preferred, if we ascribe his superiority to *process* we degrade without accounting for his excellence.

That which is reduced to system may become a principle of science, but it is no longer a prerogative of Taste:

Now loud in praise of water grounds he warms,
Or dreams with Caylus of encaustic charms ;
Now floats his liquid surface, smooth as glass,
Now works in wax, and melts the loaded mass ; 180
Yet sanguine still, though every trial fails,
The frenzy of experiment prevails.
These fools infectious, still with care repel,
They quack their Art so much 'tis never well ;
Like patients in despair of health, they try 185
What charlatans or nostrums can supply,
Till invalided, we their case record,
Amongst th' incurables in Critics' ward.

With just respect impress'd for genuine Art,
Which time alone to talent can impart, 190

from the elevation of Genius it is brought down to the level of ordinary talent, and loses in general admiration what it gains in general use. What many can perform, few will be found to praise. He who invented the rule was a genius, but he who applies it is only a mechanic.

Whatever in painting can be discovered to lessen its difficulties, and balance the inequality of talent; whatever tends to reduce the eccentricities of Genius to the regularity of routine, and to provide mechanical substitutes for sensibility and taste, may render its beauties more com-

Rich prize of Taste ! achieved by toil and thought,
 No palette miracle by process wrought !
 From study's open channel never stray,
 To chase the favourite phantom of the day ;
 Nor vainly hope, relieved from labour's claim, 195
 To find a short mechanic road to fame.

mon, but will not make them more captivating ; may possibly make it more attainable as a trade, but not more liberal as an art, or illustrious as an ornament.

Line 192. *No palette miracle by process wrought !*]—The pretended discovery of the Venetian secret will be recollected to have occasioned, a few years ago, no small sensation in the world of Taste ; and the degree to which enthusiasm may get the better of discretion, was strikingly exemplified on that occasion.

The fame of the Corinthian maid, as the inventor of painting, was nearly eclipsed by the renown of her modern rival, as the restorer of its Venetian lustre ; and the ludicrous alacrity with which men, learned in the principles, and grown grey in the practice of their Art, submitted their pencils to the guidance of a girl, is a circumstance as curious and extraordinary, as any thing of this nature, that has occurred since the days when Hercules twirled a distaff under the direction of Omphale. Let it be remembered however, to the advantage of the ancient hero, that if he became the pupil of his mistress, it was only in an art which she was fully competent to teach, and that he did

From Horace learn, ye tribes ! who make pretence
To write or paint, the *secret* is—good sense.*

The palette's treasures spread with frugal hand,
Nor glaring let the florid tribes expand, 200

not take a lesson from her in the management of his club, or the performance of his labours.

But though the delusion which operated so powerfully upon the Heraclidæ of Art is now pretty well over, the disposition which favoured it, is still unsuppressed ; and will probably furnish new opportunities to new adventurers in the field of process and experiment. New hopes arise from new nostrums, and the evils of one quackery are forgotten in the attractions of another.

An individual Artist has certainly a right, if he pleases, to convert his painting-room into a laboratory ; to call in the crucible in aid of the pencil, and conduct his picture by a course of chemical experiment : if he indulges in the fanciful procedures of the day, he takes the consequences of his practice on the responsibility of his reputation. But a body, constituted to preside over the interests of Art, cannot be too cautious, how they are induced to give countenance to those venders of palette panaceas, and Venetian vehicles : it is incumbent on them, to take care, that they

* “Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons.”

With vain attempt to catch the crowd, and rise
 The radiant star of Academic skies ;
 With just contempt reject their vulgar claim,
 Who 're always in a flutter or a flame ;

do not by their own example, authorise the Student to look to such fallacious resources, for the attainment of that ability, which Academic discipline and regular study must supply.

If the Student is taught to depend on his materials rather than his mind, to have recourse to artifice, rather than to art, and expect from the witcheries of process, some sudden burst of knowledge, or certain means of skill, he will soon turn with disgust from the dull and tedious routine of regular application, which holds out no such magical allurements ; in which no wonders are to be expected, but those which Genius can perform, and no secrets are to be discovered but such as industry extorts from time.

Line 202. *The radiant star of Academic skies ;*]—Whatever advantages may be supposed to arise from public exhibitions of the works of Taste, there is reason to fear, that they are more than counterbalanced by the evils which attend them ; and the experience of all countries in which they have been introduced, may lead us to doubt, whether, on the whole, they contribute more to promote or impede the attainment of excellence in Art.

In this country, it must be acknowledged, that our greatest painters have not been the fruit of this tree ;

Who throw out lures unlicensed, to decoy, 205
And artifice, auxiliary employ:

Reynolds, West, Barry, Hogarth, Wilson, Gainsborough, were ripe in fame and merit, before it can be said to have been planted amongst us ; and if we look abroad to the old masters, we find the most eminent amongst them were those, who flourished antecedent to such establishments.

That the various productions of the day, collected and displayed at one view, form an object highly interesting, and likely to excite in the public a more general attention to the Arts, few will be disposed to deny : that the means of comparison which an exhibition affords, must tend to improve the powers of the painter, and the taste of the spectator, though a proposition somewhat more disputable, and requiring much explanation, will perhaps be as readily conceded ; and to what extent these good effects might be secured and assisted, under judicious regulations and enlightened views, it is impossible to calculate. But our present question relates to exhibitions as they have been, as they are, and as they are likely to be ; and this view of them supplies nothing very favourable as to the past, nor flattering as to the future.

There is one good effect however, attributable to an exhibition, which appears to be of some importance, and but little alloyed with evil. It introduces at once to the public an Artist of merit, who might be a considerable time making his way to general notice, through the private circulation of his worth. Wilkie was known in a week, by

Distrust their real vigour, and believe,
They try to dazzle, only to deceive.

exhibiting his village politicians. But this advantage respects the Artist rather than the Art; and it must be recollected, that if the merits of Wilkie were published in an exhibition room, they were not produced there.

An exhibition however, it is said, excites emulation, and emulation is the spur of Genius: the conclusion is evident, and would be just, if emulation was always genuine or generous. But the spur of Genius is ill applied, if it urges in a wrong direction, and impels him to the pursuit of qualities inconsistent with the perfection of Art: if it quickens to the profitable rather than the praise-worthy: if in short, it prompts to a contention of meretricious allurements rather than of modest merit, and promotes the cunning that entraps attention more than the skill that deserves it.

He who is more ambitious of praise than merit, will stop at no means of obtaining his object: he will glitter or glare as it may suit his purpose: he will pamper without scruple, the grossest appetite of Taste, and poison rather than not please it. He is a profligate in the morality of Art, who studies every artifice of seduction, and debauches the public opinion in order to possess it more securely. An exhibition is the scene in which characters like this will always triumph: it is the drawing-room of Taste, where superficial qualities are always the most attractive: where

In hues alike remote from glare or gloom,
A soften'd splendor, and a mellow'd bloom ; 210

vanity and presumption shine in the centre of the circle, while virtue and merit are unnoticed in a corner.

Reynolds had a just impression of the ill consequences of an exhibition, considered in this light. "Our exhibitions," says he, "while they produce such admirable effects by encouraging emulation, and calling out Genius, have also a mischievous tendency, by seducing the painter to an ambition of pleasing indiscriminately the mixed multitude of persons who resort to them." While Reynolds lived however, this general run at reputation was held in check : he was the great leader of the concert, and the band tuned their instruments to his pitch : but now like Skirmish and Simpkin in the farce of the Deserter, every man plays his own tune, and endeavours to outnoise his neighbour.

Few Artists indeed, have resolution sufficient to resist the adoption of any means of attraction in a scene, where not to be noticed is to be condemned. To *strike*, is therefore, the great object of ambition : to flash upon the public eye, and fix the general gaze in annual wonder, is at once the stimulus and the study of the year. He who passes the first hour of exhibition without hearing from all sides, the echoes of his brilliancy and his force, considers the present opportunity as lost, and at once transfers his hopes to that returning period of publicity, when he can

The blushing Muse judicious Taste arrays,
Nor lets the rainbow on her bosom blaze.

try more dazzling splendours of effect, and more ingenious devices of allurement.

Thus may the spirit of competition be perverted, and the ardour of enthusiasm exhausted, in ill-judged efforts to force attention, even at the expense of Taste.

The emulation excited by an exhibition is rarely influenced by general and comprehensive views: occupied with local and partial objects, it becomes a rivalry not of positive, but comparative excellence; not of the merits of the Art, but the manner of the school. Instead of contending with the great masters, we are obliged to contend with each other; and to be the hero of the day is the summit of ambition. The painter who is not engaged in this kind of local conflict, may enter the lists with Raphael or Rubens, with Titian or Correggio, he consults his own taste, and chooses his combatant; but he who suspends his picture in a public exhibition, must contend with those around him, and conform to the fashions of the scene in which he hopes to shine. If he would not be defeated or disregarded, he must practise the manœuvres of his competitors, and endeavour to foil them at their own weapons.

But, will not a fine work of Art strike impressively in all situations, and consequently preserve its attraction in a public exhibition? This question might be answered by Wilson, whose works were constantly overlooked there;

Pure Art disdains by glitter to engage,
Nor borrows taste theatric from the stage.

by Gainsborough, who withdrew from the exhibition in disgust, or even by Reynolds, who sometimes required all the weight of his reputation, to bear him up against more popular and imposing novelties.

A chaste and sober style of Art is lost in the surrounding glare ; is suppressed in the ostentatious struggle of obtrusive pretensions. Shewy qualities will strike in a crowd of pictures, as well as in a crowd of persons, and he who catches the eye, is not always the most worthy to be seen.

Particular examples may perhaps be found, of extraordinary talents having forced their way to public attention, through all the quackeries of exhibition allurements ; especially in the humbler classes of Art, and on a smaller scale : but the Author's observations are general : if merit could never be distinguished in an exhibition, to reason upon the good or ill effects of such an establishment, would be absurd.

That it is possible, to combine some of the higher qualities of Art, with those popular seductions and exhibition blandishments, the genius of the day has sufficiently proved : but it is the general tendency of this annual contest, to produce a taste for those tinsel captivations, which makes the evil of its influence preponderate.

The study of an exhibition effect is now indeed an Art

There all is strained too high, or sunk too low, 215
And sober grandeur still submits to shew ;

in itself; an art also, which occupies the attention to the prejudice of nobler objects. It is a kind of scene painting, in which, at a given distance, Carver would surpass Claude: in which, every thing to be forcible must be violent—to be great, must be exaggerated: in which, all delicacy of expression, detail of parts, and discrimination of hues, are laid aside as useless particulars, or lost in the formless void of general masses.

The exhibition is to Art, what the stage is to Manners—a scene where every thing must be extravagant to strike: the actor and the picture are equally dressed out for shew, and that which at a distance, appears all gold and jewels, a nearer approach proves to be cut glass and copper lace.

In this view, the immense extent and height of our exhibition room are particularly injudicious: to do any execution there, the painter is obliged to bring his Art to bear beyond the natural range of graphic ordnance. Every touch takes aim at the eye of the spectator, by a nice calculation of altitude and distance, and he must be a good marksman who can hit the point at which it should tell. He who is not practised in this species of graphic gunnery, whatever may be the weight of his metal, will but waste his shot.

Thus, the Artist in the progress of his work, consults, not the effect of his picture on the eazel, of which he can

High-stilted action struts for simple grace,
And modest Nature seldom shews her face;

judge, but is guided by what he concludes will be the effect of it in the exhibition, which he can only guess : he proceeds however, upon the true hap-hazard principle, paints every part as a speculation of optics, and flatters himself, that

“ What disproportioned seems, or out of place,

“ Due distance reconciles to form and grace.”

But whatever influence the establishment of an exhibition may be thought to have upon the Art, its effect upon the Artist, it is to be feared, cannot be considered favourable. Emulation in liberal minds is a generous passion that disdains all unfair advantages in the contest, and esteems the honour of the triumph far beyond the value of the prize. But the desire of distinction may exist without the emulation of merit : it is then, not the spur of Genius, but the spring of vanity, and forms the irregular ambition of little minds. To those who are moved by this degenerate impulse, an exhibition offers a wide field of operation : little scrupulous as to the means of obtaining their object, they can there set various agents at work, all co-operating to the same end. They may call in policy, to the aid of painting, and sometimes succeed by trick, where they might fail by talent.

What ingenious modes of attracting attention has ambitious imbecility devised ! Two hostile generals cannot manœuvre with more dexterity, to gain an advantageous

In swelling tides inflated passion flows,
And wild expression waits on studied woes. 220

position in the field, than two rival painters, to secure the most conspicuous place in an exhibition room.

Invention is exhausted in concerting new peculiarities of picture and frame, to secure at once priority of impression and distinction of place, and the spectator, who sometimes wonders at the awkward arrangement of an exhibition, is not aware, that works are placed there, like men upon a chess board, not by fancy or taste, but by design and stratagem.

How much the habit of contriving those little schemes, and grasping at such paltry advantages, must tend to destroy all generosity of emulation in the Artist, and all dignity of sentiment in the man, is too evident to need either proof or illustration.

But it is amongst those on whom the privilege of office confers the power of choice, that this ill effect is sometimes most strikingly apparent. To have the interests of our rivals in our hands, and hold the means to injure or to serve, affords an opportunity, which generosity will accept for its honour, selfishness will seek for its advantage, and malevolence will seize for its gratification. The consciousness of our power, in liberal minds, will always prevent its abuse; for when we can do what we please, is the noblest moment for doing only what we ought.

“*Id facere laus est, quod decet, non quod licet.*”

The pompous pageants of the scene impart
A blustering, vain, bravura style of Art,

And if there is a generous feeling in the human composition, it ought surely to be called into action, at a time, when it may assume the highest character of virtue, as a sacrifice of interest at the shrine of magnanimity.

But unhappily, these principles are too often forgotten in the heat and hurry of professional competition, and painters and poets, as well as warriors, will-sometimes, take the field without such embarrassing accoutrements. To this kind of omission it must be attributed, that in the annual conflicts of the graphic host, we occasionally see an opportunity of reaping the laurels of liberality, not only neglected, but perverted; that we find it seized upon as the exulting moment of secure self-preference; when malice may wound without appearing to strike; when arrogance may thrust himself forward in every conspicuous place, and suppress his rivals under the sanction of example, and the shelter of authority.

In this way it is, that the influence of an exhibition may become detrimental to the Artist, if not to the Art; and undermine the principles of the one, while it displays the powers of the other. In this way, might an interesting competition of Genius and Taste be degraded to a periodical squabble of low passions and paltry interests, which instead of promoting honest emulation, or encouraging modest merit, would be made the instrument of suppressing both,

The Muse laments her meretricious fate,
While tinsel triumphs grace her gaudy state.

Some, hope by mere facility to please, 225
And think all excellence consists in ease :

and become the pestilent focus of "envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness."

While discussing, as a general question, the advantages and disadvantages which attend exhibitions of Art, it is impossible to overlook the claims of *that* exhibition which a British Artist may be allowed to consider with pride, as affording a display of living genius that may challenge competition with the collected powers of the Continent. An exhibition also, which the British public should regard with some kindness, if not with some gratitude, as the sole support of an establishment, to which the nation is indebted for a general diffusion of taste and talent through all those pursuits and occupations, which are the most important to her manufacturing and commercial superiority.

Whatever may be its influence upon the Art, or the Artist, the exhibition is the support of the Academy. With a disinterestedness unexampled in any other age or country, a body of Artists have combined their efforts, and devoted the fruit of their labours, not (as the promoters of other exhibitions have justifiably done) to their own emolument, but to the maintenance of a public Institution, which ought

His rapid hand is Presto's favourite boast
 Through all his toils his pencil travels post ;
 Flies, like a spendthrift heir, from part to part,
 Out-runs his strength, and dissipates his art. 230

Attempt not spirit till you strength acquire,
 And prize fidelity much more than fire ;

rather to have supported them, than to have been supported by them. When without patronage or protection themselves, they became the patrons and protectors of their country's taste and reputation ; and as far as their contracted means allowed, they have endeavoured to supply to the youthful genius of their time, those opportunities of improvement, which may enable them to rival their benefactors, and which national liberality and policy should have provided on a scale proportioned to the wealth and character of the empire.

Line 224. *While tinsel triumphs grace her gaudy state.*]—The Author speaks of the stage only as relative to painting : he by no means pretends to criticise the art of the actor, which works its own ends by its appropriate means, and is regulated on principles of experience and scenic necessity, of which he cannot be a competent judge.

A play and a picture, are certainly, both intended as representations of nature ; and supposing the models to be judiciously chosen, it would seem, that the perfection of

Press forward on your steed with steady pace,
Nor whip and spur at starting in the race ;
True spirit, practice only can produce, 235
Mature its birth, and obviate its abuse ;

the one, as well as the other, must be in proportion to the taste and truth of the imitation. But whether it is, that the exigency of dramatic effect requires it, or that the influence of custom has rendered it necessary, we find, particularly in the higher exhibitions of the stage, that a considerable latitude of likeness is allowed, if not recommended, in language, action, dress, and every other constituent of the scene ; and even where the resemblance professes to be the most exact, it is generally, so overcharged and exaggerated, as to take it quite out of the sphere of graphic propriety.

On the stage, it appears, that every thing must be raised above the natural pitch, as well as the voice of the actor ; the gesture of common life, the expression of real passion, are too tame and inanimate, to produce effect in a theatre, where the delicate graces of action, the finer fluctuations of feature and character, are suppressed by distance, or unnoticed in a crowd of qualities more striking and obtrusive. Every part of the dramatic picture must be magnified to suit the focus of the scene in which it is to be shewn ; and an actor, who should lower his performance to the precise standard of nature and simplicity, would perhaps, find the truth of his imitation acknowledged in a general

Light child of Taste! it thrives in talent's prime,
Abortive, when it comes before its time;
A foe, solicited, unsought, a friend,
A lawful means, but a licentious end.

240

Lo! from his go-cart loosed, in fancy strong,
The thoughtless Tyro joins the dashing throng,

hiss. He would be thought insipid by the pit, inanimate by the boxes, asleep by the galleries, and absurd by all parts of the house.

Painting does not labour under this disadvantage: her characters do not require to be raised upon the stilts of exaggeration: she need never strain her voice above the natural key, or work her agonies of passion, beyond the measured emotion of real life. It is when she attempts to assume the mask and the buskin, that she degrades both her office and character, and merits the hiss, which perhaps the actor who should entirely reject their assistance would both receive and deserve.

But upon whatever principle we may reconcile or account for the difference which exists in the picturesque of the graphic and dramatic scene, or however we may consider the merits of each capable of closer similitude and mutual illustration, experience has proved, in all countries, that the painter derives no advantage in his art from the study of the stage. "*Quid enim deformius quam scenam in vitam*

Affects to soar with hardly skill to crawl,
His step—a stumble, and his flight—a fall ;

transfere," may be applied to Art, as well as to life ; and a theatrical taste, has ever been considered by sound critics of all ages, the most impure and hopeless vice which can deprave the powers of an Artist.

If the English School has discovered some propensity to this defect, it may perhaps, be ascribed in a great degree, to the practice of painting scenes from plays, which has for some years past, supplied the only occupation of the historic pencil in this country. The painter who takes his subject from Shakspeare, or any other poet in possession of the stage, is naturally desirous to observe the manner in which it is usually represented by the histrionic Artist : he wishes to compare the dramatic composition with his own, and avail himself of such suggestions for his purpose, as the general arrangement of the theatrical picture may supply. During this process however, his taste too often receives a bias, which materially affects the conduct and character of his work. He finds it impossible to get out of the theatre ; he cannot separate in his imagination the natural situation from the dramatic exhibition, nor extricate his pencil from those accessories of scenic extravagance, which mingling with all his conceptions, pervert the purity of his art, and destroy the simplicity of nature. Thus his figures are all actors, and his scene is a drop curtain : his groups instead of being formed from his own observation of pictu-

His object, less to please you than surprise, 245
All diligence is dullness in his eyes ;

resque propriety, are all constructed according to theatrical etiquette, in which every limb is posé; every individual struggles eagerly into notice; and no character, whatever may be the urgency or energy of the action, can be tolerated in the rudeness of turning his back on the spectators.

The tendency to the vice of taste here described, is not it is to be feared, decreasing amongst us. On the contrary, there is some danger, lest the authority of precept should co-operate with the influence of example in promoting its extension. It is not uncommon to hear the stage recommended, as a profitable school of study, to the painter—to find a course of operas prescribed to the valetudinarians of *Virtù*, as the best restorative of Taste, as the most efficacious means to refine their notions of simplicity and grace, and invigorate the whole graphic system.

The frippery character, and fantastic graces which have so long distinguished and degraded the productions of the French, may be in a great measure, ascribed to the influence of the dramatic mania which prevailed amongst that people. It has been well observed, that their Artists looked at Nature only through an opera glass, and seemed to think her beauties much embellished by that flattering medium.

The splendid and imposing pictures of the stage first

The praise of cold correctness he declines,
And patience to the plodding race resigns ;

eclipsed, and then corrupted the chaster imitations of the graphic scene. Their critics once accustomed to the luxurious treat of theatric sensuality, lost all relish for the plainer fare of painting ; and began to consider as tame and insipid, the unostentatious dignity of Raphael and the Roman School. Nothing was piquant or palatable, but that which betrayed the haut gout of the grand opera. Strutting heroes, flaunting heroines, dramatic mummeries and meretricious airs, got possession of the public eye, which in a general perversion of taste, turned with contempt from the modest claims of Art and the sober simplicity of Nature.

The fatal consequences of that inflated style which grew out of this histrionic hot-bed, have been seen in the continued prostitution of powers which, better directed, might have done honour to any age or nation ; and should operate as a timely warning to those amongst us, who may be desirous of tricking out their Art in the luscious loveliness of the stage.

The graphic Muse disdains to imitate the second-hand graces of tragedy queens, and opera figurantes ; she resorts at once to the fountain head of Truth and Taste, and holds herself " the mirror up to Nature."

The painter who frequents the stage for the purpose of improvement, indulges in a kind of ocular intoxication, to

In search of spirit, truth and sense forsakes,
And wild extravagance for Genius takes.

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which his Taste will soon fall a victim : the sober strength of Art quickly swells to the bloated debility of theatric extravagance, his hand shakes in all the tremors of affectation, and his Genius dies of a dramatic dropsy.

Line 242. *In search of spirit, truth and taste forsakes,*]—One of the greatest obstacles to the attainment of excellence in any art, arises from the mistaken importance, which is often attached to qualities connected with the means by which we operate. We neglect the object of our journey in the allurements of the road—we stop to pick up some gaudy flower of the foot path, or perhaps, loiter our time to display our agility, in those unessential graces of movement, which rather retard than facilitate our progress. Thus, the poet engrossed by the beauties of language and the harmony of his versification, is sometimes seduced from attending to the vigour of his thoughts and the truth of his descriptions : the musician, delighted with the freedom of his bow, and the brilliancy of his finger, forgets in a flourish that the clamour of astonishment is not the tribute of Taste : and the painter, instead of rushing forward eagerly to his destination in the temple of Nature and Truth, diverts his vigour, and deviates from his course, in pursuit of qualities, which have no real value, unless, when they are displayed as the fruit of his arrival, rather than the product of his road.

Of all Artists indeed, the painter is he who suffers most

This headlong, hasty, weak, presumptuous train,
With pity contemplate, with pride disdain ;

from this error ; for in proportion as the means by which he operates, are more arduous and interesting than those of any other art, in proportion is he exposed to be deluded by their importance, and to confound the perfection of the work with the use of the tools.

He who knows the difficulty of managing the pencil, is naturally pleased to see it employed with ease, and as the merits of execution may be displayed on any subject, however trivial or contemptible, an Artist will often find matter for admiration in works, from which the unskilful observer would experience only indifference or dislike.

We should however, carefully distinguish between the merits of the means, and the merits of the end ; and endeavour to impress on our judgment a proper sense of their value and importance. In the English School, the merits of the means are allowed to preponderate in the scale, to a degree not quite consistent with the just equipoise of Taste. They have been much the object of ambition amongst us, and have attained to a dangerous dexterity in our practice, as well as a delusive importance in our estimation. That quality of execution called spirit, is considered so essential, as to be the first demand of criticism, and is sometimes carried to such an excess, as to preclude all hope of correctness.

The traces of time and toil are not to be pardoned

Boast not of speed, nor think the crown of Taste,
On flimsy feats of expedition placed ;

even in the production of a Student : the “ *limæ labor et mora* ” we disdain. The most superficial dabbler in Vertù, will turn with indifference or disgust, from the substantial merits of Nature and Truth, unless they are served up with a strong seasoning of this pencil provocative. We are like some epicures, who will devour any thing by the help of a savoury sauce ; and the high peppering of execution has got such possession of our palate, that we are comparatively insensible to the more solid ingredients of good Taste.

To suffer the mere flourish and affectation of the pencil to influence so materially, our judgment of Art, is equally pernicious and absurd : an over admiration of such mechanical merits, never fails to divert the Student from the pursuit of those higher qualities of painting, which he ought to consider, as the primary and important object of his ambition.

To imitate with accuracy, is the first and most useful lesson which an Academy should teach ; for when the habit of fidelity is once established, facility follows of course. Spirit is never in the right place but when it attends upon Truth. Correctness is the only ground upon which we can embroider with propriety, the graces of elegance : and of all vanities, that seems to be the most preposterous, which exults in doing with ease that which is not done with effect.

Touch, and retouch your works, review, compare, 255
Compose with freedom, but correct with care;

Line 253. *Boast not of speed, nor think the crown of Taste,]*
—To excite surprise, if not the object of all Arts, seems at least the vanity of all Artists. The difficult and the uncommon, are performed with more exultation than the useful or the excellent; and it must be confessed, that they are generally followed with more avidity, and applauded with more warmth.

Misplaced admiration is indeed a common evil in society, and an evil much more important in its effects, than is generally supposed: it is watering the weed instead of the flower—turning into a wrong channel the current of that stream which is necessary to set in motion all the mills of Genius. To lavish applause on that which is not justly commendable, is to waste the dearest reward of rational ingenuity; it impels in a wrong direction the natural desire of praise, and often makes a quack or a coxcomb of him, who under the influence of an appreciation more judicious, might have been a man of sense and merit.

But the wonderful, so invariably commands the acclamations of the crowd, that he who desires popularity, can seldom resist the temptation to gratify the public palate with its most favourite food. Thus the dancer endeavours rather to surprise by the agility, than to please by the grace of his movements; for he who jumps the highest, or twirls round on one leg with the greatest velocity, is always the

While Taste can find a fault, or toil remove,
With patient hand, still polish and improve ;

most applauded. The poet who can string together one hundred bad rhymes, “*stans pede in uno*,” as Horace says, is more vain of his achievement than if he had composed five hundred good ones by the ordinary process of study and time ; and the most beautiful characters from the pen of a Tompkins, do not excite half the admiration that was bestowed on the scrawl written by Buckinger’s toes.

In Art, there have been many painters who coveted the praise of rapidity even at the expense of excellence ; and perhaps, the taste of “*Luco fa presto*” is not so much out of repute in the present day as might be wished, for the credit of the British School.

He who is ambitious of producing excellence, must not be sparing of time as an ingredient : there may be a lucky hit of rapidity, or a fortunate effect of chance, but no work worthy of lasting admiration, was ever performed in a hurry. The efficacy of time and patience is not sufficiently considered in the “*materia graphica*” of modern practice ; and to the more persevering use of those simples, may, in a great measure, be attributed, the superior success of the faculty of Taste in former times.

Mengs says, that “one fine statue conferred immortality upon its Author amongst the ancients, but that now fifty bad ones will hardly enable the Artist to live.” Modern painters, in particular, may be said to be like Dutch

Perfections, visions floating in your view,

With undiverted vigour still pursue,

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doctors, they must make up by the number of their patients for the deficiency of their fees ; they must dispatch their work quickly, and kill or cure at a visit. We are obliged to pluck our fruit before it is ripe, that we may have something to send to market : in the harassing struggle of worldly wants, the painter cannot provide for the perfection of his Art, and that he may live himself, is obliged to commit a suicide upon his reputation.

Modern philosophers have laboured hard to dislodge the poet and the painter from the elevated regions of inspiration, and place them on the general level of mental equality. They attempt, on a principle of education, to account for the eccentricities of Genius, and resolve all its phænomena into the simple power of attention. But however we may be disposed to doubt that it is the essence, we cannot deny that it is one of the most important attributes of this mental divinity ; for without powerful and persevering attention, all other qualities are inert or ineffectual. Of this truth, the ancients were perfectly convinced, and the unwearied industry with which they seconded the more celestial impulse of their Taste, was equally exemplary and successful.

Polycletus spent his whole life in perfecting one statue, which from the faultless accuracy of its proportions, was honoured by the name of "the Canon." Protogenes employed many years in painting a single figure of Jalytus ;

Fame in your head, and ardour in your heart,
Before you—Nature, and around you—Art.

Tho' Genius rules a manor rich in mines,
'Tis labour's hand the precious ore refines;

and Virgil, after having spent eleven years in composing the *Ænied*, desired in his will that it might be destroyed, as not sufficiently corrected for the public eye.

The preparatory labours of the old masters in sketches, drawing, models, and every other expedient of study and improvement, have shewn, that they never drew upon their Genius for that which their industry could supply; nor desired the praise of speed, when they could acquire that of skill.

Whether we possess the power of attention in an equal degree with our predecessors in the cultivation of Art, may perhaps, be questioned, but there can be no doubt, that the practice of application was carried to a greater extent in former times. Very little observation may convince the unprejudiced mind, that it is not Genius or Taste that is wanting to modern Artists, but time and patronage: they have the strength of the ancients, but they have not the same inducements, nor the same opportunities to exert it; and if the productions of the present age are inferior to those of the Greeks, it is because excellence is not excited by such powerful stimuli, nor pursued with such persevering application.

That cuts and polishes each gem with care, 265
And sets for wisdom, or for wit to wear.

With toil intrepid then direct your aim,
To reach the proudest eminence of fame ;

Line 262. *Before you—Nature, and around you—Art.*]—
The judicious painter will, as far as is consistent with his means, endeavour to collect around him some of the best examples of his Art. Pictures are to the Artist, what his library is to the man of letters ; they make him acquainted with the state of the country in which he is about to travel ; shew him what tracks have been already opened, and to what extent they have been pursued : they stimulate his ardour, enlighten his judgment, and enlarge the stock of his ideas.

But while the painter studies and admires the productions of great men, if he desires to equal, he will decline to imitate them. Johnson justly observes, that “no man was ever great by imitation.” Imitation is a crutch upon which feebleness sometimes hobbles into notice, and he who would copy pictures rather than create them, may reasonably distrust the vigour of his genius, and the value of his application.

There is however, a mimicry in Art, as well as in life, and the manner of the pencil, like that of the person, is sometimes copied with perverted ingenuity. But he who pleases himself by putting on the graphic face of Rem-

When sanguine first, with all our hopes unfurl'd,
We mount this Andes of the moral world ; 270
Th' ascent seems easy, as in haste to rise,
We, all impetuous, rush into the skies ;
But soon our speed is check'd, we pant, we blow,
In spite of every effort—still below :
While hooting crowds defeated folly hail, 275
And ridicule re-echoes through the vale.

Yet, while you shun this rash, unruly race,
Avoid the tame, who creep a tardy pace ;
The plodding herd ! who turn the graphic wheel,*
With dog-trot diligence, and drousy zeal ; 280

brandt, or Titian, or Rubens, or Reynolds, should recollect that what is natural expression in the original, becomes grimace in the copyist ; and that although we may admit the resemblance, we consider it distortion. Such a practice should at least be left as the refuge of those, who are incapable of higher efforts ;—should be consigned to the common creepers of the garden, who unable to rise by

* Eight lines taken from this passage, and sixteen lines from the last Canto, were quoted by the Author in the Preface of his former publication.

Who spend on petty cares their puny powers,
 And live to polish pores, and hairs, and flowers :
 Nature, indignant, spurns the servile race,
 The dull reflectors of her daily face !
 Minutiæ mongers ! microscopic wights ! 285
 Whom Denner captivates, and Dow delights.

Fastidious toil oft frustrates its own ends,
 And coxcomb-like, punctiliously offends ;
 To *stiff*, o'er-labour'd, or detail'd, to *dry*,
 Your pains appear, but strength and spirit fly, 290

their own strength, fasten eagerly upon some lofty trunk of talent, and imagine they share in the vigour of its elevation, when they twine around its branches.

Line 285. *Minutiæ mongers ! microscopic wights !*]—The vice of Art here spoken of, is almost unknown to the practice of the British School ; which perhaps, may be thought to display some propensity to the opposite defect. But though the laborious minuteness of German imitation is very generally reprobated by our painters, it is not without its advocates amongst our critics ; and there are many curious lovers of detail who are never so pleased with Art, as when all consideration of the whole is forgotten in a futile attention to the parts.

With this cast of connoisseurs, labour is never lost but

By cold correction pictures lose their fire,
As criminals beneath the scourge expire.

when it is concealed; tameness is truth, and minuteness merit: to be hard is to be accurate; to be smooth is to be finished.

As this Taste has many attractions for the vulgar, and is invariably adopted by those whose eyes are yet unopened by observation and comparison, its progress amongst us should be watched with vigilance, and opposed without reserve; for the true excellence of Art, has never, in any school, survived its establishment. Servility of imitation, is a kind of slavery, which suppresses all the energies of Genius, and destroys the noblest powers of the pencil. It is now ravaging France, in a revolution of Art, which has subjugated the powers of Guerin and Girard, to the despotism of David: from the days of Albert Durer, downwards, it has laid waste the whole graphic surface of the German empire: with the laborious imbecility of Mengs, it emasculated the noble spirit of Velasquez amongst the Spaniards; and the last embers of Italian Genius were extinguished by its means, in the polished insipidity of Pompeo Battoni. That we have been preserved from its destructive influence in this country, must be in a great measure, attributed to Reynolds; for Hudson, Highmore, and Ashly, had not strength to resist its encroaches, and Ramsey if he could, would have established it.

It is however, in his best works only, that Reynolds

With broader eye all trifling cares control,
And study parts, subservient to the whole.

affords a pure example of that happy medium of imitation, between vague indecision, and vulgar detail. His general style is perhaps, too loose and incorrect, as to design, for the safe observation of those, who have not judgment sufficient to discriminate between the merits and the defects of a great man. His picture of the Tragic Muse however, may be pointed out, as a model of that judicious imitation, which preserves the essential and the picturesque, without descending to the trivial and the accidental : which is sufficiently general for grandeur, and sufficiently particular for truth : which produces breadth without baldness ; precision without hardness ; and spirit without ostentation.

This work, in all the merits of execution, has perhaps never been surpassed : Barry in his letter to the Dilettanti Society, considers it “ both as to the ideal and the execution the finest picture of its kind in the the world.” It presents the rare union of power and discretion ; of sensibility and science. The painter has taken from Nature, all that is necessary for Truth, and added from Genius, all that can be required by Taste.

It exhibits a style of imitation calculated to give dignity to the humblest subject, and a tone of colouring appropriate to the most sublime.

But, in rejecting the laboured littleness of style which is so incompatible with the genuine excellence of Art, and

Still as you paint, by chance suggested, rise 295
Means unforeseen, and merits which surprise ;

leaving all those who delight in detail, to work their minutiae miracles on fruit, flowers, and furniture, the English School have not only the authority of Reynolds, but the example of Titian, Correggio, Rembrandt, Rubens, and every other Artist who is worthy of consideration in the executive department of painting. Those critics therefore, who so zealously extol the polishers and japanners of the pencil, must in vain profess their admiration of those great masters, for they prove, that whatever compliments they, for the credit of their Taste, may be induced to pay to Titian, or Vandyke, their hearts are with Dow and with Denner.

The style of English Art, in its best examples, is second only to that of the Venetian School ; and, may justly, hope to rival the noblest productions of the palette ; if it be not corrupted and depraved, by some vices of bad Taste, which it must be confessed, appear at present to be gaining ground amongst us.

What therefore there may be of negligent and incorrect in our practice, let us labour to reform ; what there is of mannered and meretricious, let us study to suppress ; but not by substituting the mechanical servility of vulgar toil, for the liberal and graceful spirit of scientific imitation.

Line 295. *Still as you paint, by chance suggested, rise*—Johnson observes, that “ every great work is performed

As wheels up steep ascents, impell'd with pain,
But swifter roll spontaneous to the plain,
Obstructions aid the force they first oppress,
And failure, often, but foreruns success. 300
Fruits unexpected spring from patient toil,
Like buried gold discover'd in the soil ;
The pencil's charms in broken beauty rise,
And *surface* sweets that skill and feeling prize.

Yet, as the purest natures taint of sin, 305
And virtue's self, to vice is near akin,
In painting, thus, to faults perfections lead,
And errors grow on merits run to seed,

by a combination of art and chance." Reynolds says also, that "it is a great matter to be in the way of accident." We should indeed, much more frequently hear of the assistance derived from this important ally, were it not for the vanity of skill, which scorns to confess its obligations to such an associate. In all our exploits, we are ambitious of being thought the sole agents : we would have every thing considered as the inspiration of our genius, or the result of our sagacity : as having been planned by our prudence, and performed by our strength.

If every great Artist, in poetry and painting, in politics

To hard, the firm and steady pencil tends,
The light and flowing, oft, in flimsy ends ; 310
If careful—tame ; inaccurate, if free ;
If dextrous—manner'd, in the next degree ;
Extremes, alike, in either hue behold,
Hot—in the golden, in the silvery—cold ;

and war, were to point out to our observation, those parts of his success, which resulted from the influence of this common contributor, we should perhaps, find it most busy where we least suspected its operation ; and the historian and the critic, would be spared much deep sagacity of conjecture and ingenious refinement of elucidation.

But this is a disclosure, which the pride of Genius and the discretion of Science will alike refuse, and the divers of politics and taste, will always be permitted to plunge into the depths of design and deliberation, in search of those causes, which often lie exposed upon the surface of accident.

It would perhaps, be prejudicial to display the full operation of this agent, lest we should weaken the confidence of skill, and discredit the influence of knowledge. It is generally most in our favour, when we are most independent of its assistance—it must come uncalled, and act unsolicited. The judicious Artist will accept, but will not seek its aid, for though the system that excludes its suggestions may be the most certain, it never will be the most successful.

Faithful to parts—a fritter'd whole we find ; 315

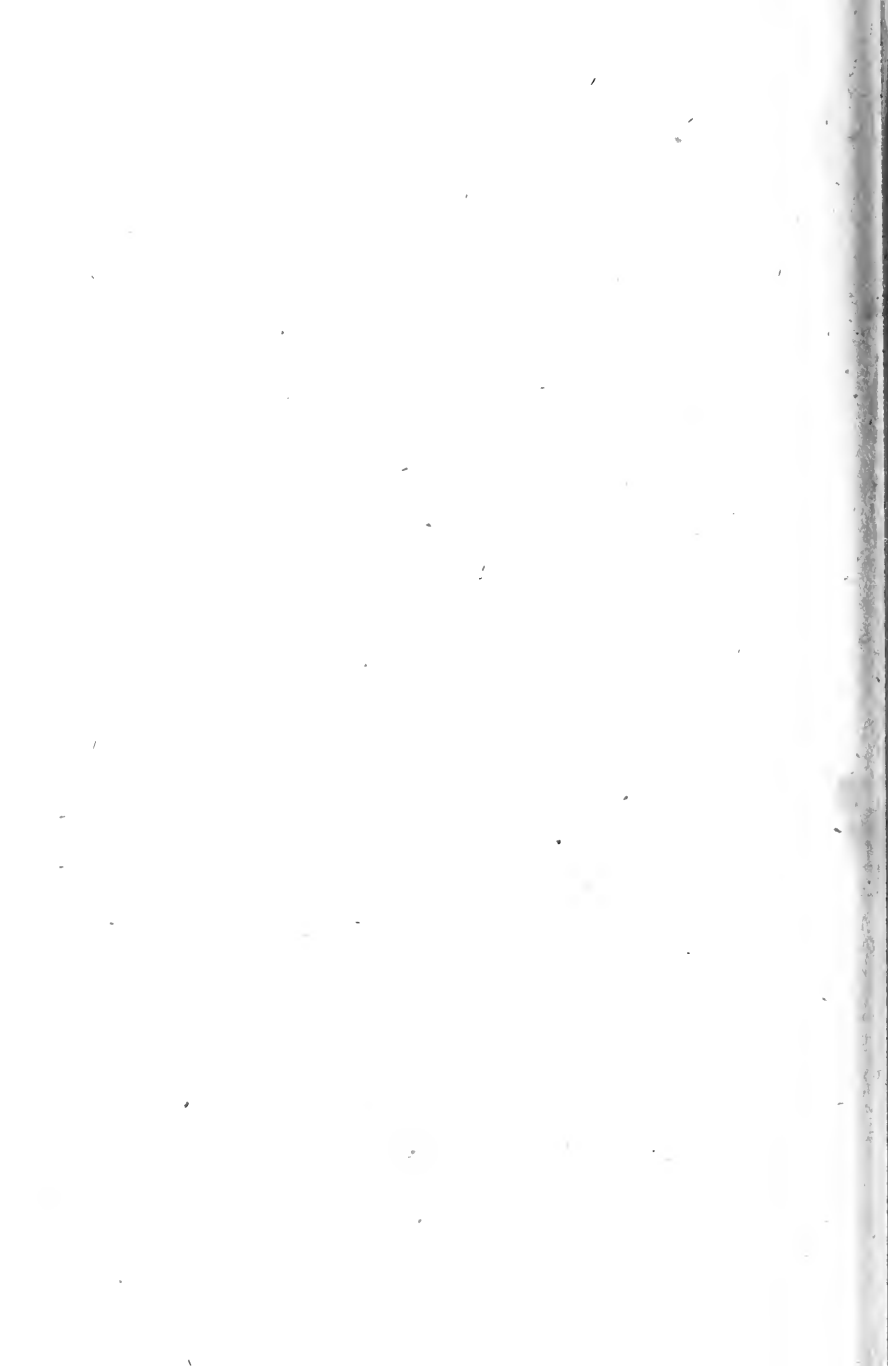
If mass'd and general—vague, and undefined.

Wherever merit's tender shoots expand,

Some kindred vice luxuriates near at hand ;

With the wild vigour of a weed invades

The healthful flower, that sickens in its shades. 320



CANTO SIXTH.

ARGUMENT.

Difficulty of avoiding extremes in art—advantages resulting from the candid opinion of friends, and even the severity of foes—weakness of allowing ourselves to be irritated by the malevolence of criticism—right of the public, according to their judgment, to pay the painter and the poet in censure or in praise—our powers often over-rated by our own prejudices—difficulty of forming a just estimate of our own merit, arising from the suggestions of Vanity and the partialities of friendship—the number of victims to these delusions; and the propriety of distrusting partial praise—allusion to those who affect to please only the judicious few—Apostrophe to the public judgment as the final and impartial tribunal of Taste—the various kinds of culprits tried at this awful bar—the general justice of its decisions, in spite of the quackeries of party and fashion which may prevail for a time to influence its proceedings—the Student counselled to beware of aiming at premature reputation—warned not to disgrace the character of an Artist by the low passions of envy—the sons of Genius urged to unite, and make common cause against the persecutions of pride, dulness, and avarice—the painter recommended to select a subject for his pencil, which shall be moral as well as picturesque—two subjects from ancient history proposed—the history of our own country recommended to the illustration of the patriot pencil—allusion to the various glories of Britain, her sages, heroes, and bards—supposition of the wondrous works, to which similar subjects of celebration would have given rise in the ancient world—propriety

of paying public honours to living virtue as well as of commemorating departed heroism—hope expressed that Britain will not allow herself to be surpassed in the pacific glories of the Arts—agency of the Arts essential in creating and preserving the best renown of nations—prophecy of the future triumphs of Taste in Britain, when on the restoration of peace, her princes and statesmen shall be impressed with the policy and liberality, of stimulating and protecting the genius of their country—the Author's closing address to the young votaries of Taste; recommending the dedication of their powers to the higher pursuits of Art—warning them against the prostitution of the pencil to the purposes of immorality—reminding them of the ancient dignity of their profession; and exhorting them by a noble and patriotic application of their talents, to celebrate the glories, excite the admiration, and deserve the protection of their country.

CANTO VI.



Honos alit artes, omnesque incenduntur ad studia gloria.

CICERO.

BETWEEN extremes, on either side we stray,

Where Taste and Feeling only, find the way ;

But, as in narrow seas, the pilot's care

Looks watchful round for every beacon there,

So, in the straits of Taste, judicious zeal 5

Observes the lights that candid friends reveal :

Ev'n foes befriend, when in our faults, severe,

They lash the only foes we ought to fear,

Their focus magnifies, and clearly shews

What friendship can't descry, or won't disclose. 10

Let surly censors rail, without offence,

Forgive the satire, when you feel the sense,

Mark where they rage, and what is wrong remove,
You take a proud revenge—when you improve.
Praise may be flattery, ignorance, or fear, . 15
But censure's voice is commonly sincere ;
And they who best a sharp reproof endure,
Will, in the caustic, often find a cure.

'Tis weak to let your indignation warm,
Tho' blockheads brew around the critic storm ; 20
And roughly treated in the gale, you brave
The utmost fury of the fool and knave :
As well, the sea-worn sailor might complain
Of rocks and sands, and tempests on the main :
Such is the common lot of all who choose, 25
From life's dull track, to wander with the Muse.

Who print, or paint, the public right proclaim,
To pay in censure, what they seek in fame ;

Line 25. *Such is the common lot of all who choose*]—The fear of criticism, like the fear of death, is salutary to a certain extent : as the one is the protector of our physical, so the other is the guardian of our intellectual safety ; and while they produce caution without cowardice, they act as a proper restraint upon ignorance and temerity.

A legal tender each, all records join,
To prove the creditor can't choose his coin. 30
The brilliant sun that on Parnassus plays,
In light and shade of censure and of praise,

But it is difficult, in either case, to keep our apprehensions within due bounds; and as fear is the most debilitating of all passions, the powers of many a hero in arts and in arms, have fallen a sacrifice to terrors, which are neither to be overcome nor excused.

How many, at this moment, stand trembling on the shores of criticism, who, with vigour to rise superior to the storm, still hesitate to encounter all its perils! How many, qualified like Columbus, to explore a passage to undiscovered regions of knowledge, yet steer timorously by the old charts, and dread to quit the common tracks of Taste!

“ Thus *criticism* makes cowards of us all.”

The critic is the nightmare of Genius, that haunts his imagination, disturbs his dreams, and sits heavy on his hopes. The critic is a despot that regards originality as an insurrection against established law, and suppresses even the desire of glory in the apprehension of disgrace.

What has been the fruit of criticism in all ages?—servility and imitation. The noblest productions of the human mind have, in every country, preceded the establishment of its influence. Genius produces critics, but is never produced by them: they follow submissively in the track of a

Will not direct its ray at our command,
Or gild the spot where we may chance to stand :
Yet tho' cold-shivering in the shade you stare, 35
To see some coxcomb basking in the glare,

great man, and turn round arrogantly, to intercept the progress of those who have the spirit to surpass him.

Criticism promotes mediocrity, and impedes excellence ; it exposes faults, but cannot inspire beauties ; and while it cultivates the judgment, represses the genius of a people.

But if this be the effect of criticism, when it is most liberal and enlightened, what must be its operation when it is most prejudiced and uninformed ! When, as in the Arts, it assumes all the airs of authority without the claims of knowledge, and is presumptuous in proportion as it is superficial.

In literature, the public taste is commonly directed by persons who have some pretensions to be heard upon the subject : they are almost always, professors or proficients, in the art of which they speak ; and often, in their powers of performance, vindicate their right to judge. The poet, the historian, and the philosopher, are generally tried by their peers ; who, although they may be sometimes tainted with the jealousy of competition, must, at least, be acknowledged to understand the case, and to have a common interest in the establishment of sound principles, and pure Taste.

But in the Arts, every man is a critic except the Artist ;

Desert may still console him mid the gloom,
The tardy beam will shine—upon his tomb.

But oft deceived, the tasteless age we blame,
And doubt the judgment that denies us fame ; 40

and any man may come forward to direct the public judgment, except him who is the best qualified for that office.

In literature, the scholar considers it as no impeachment of his liberality, to review with vigilance the productions of his rivals ; to expose their faults without ceremony, and their mistakes without commiseration : nor age, nor sex finds mercy at his hands, if, in the plenitude of his critical authority, he thinks, that reproof is necessary or just. He even claims credit for his activity, and considers himself, as a meritorious guardian of the public Taste. But the Artist, it seems, cannot be allowed a similar privilege : if he steps forward to expose the errors of imbecility, or the artifices of imposture ; he is envious, illiberal and malevolent : though every vice of the pencil should rage around him, he must not interfere to preserve the purity of Art from the contagion, or rescue the public Taste from imposition and depravation.

The poet may scrutinize and contest the claims of his contemporaries : he may open a masked battery upon his brother bard—strike him with the sword of sarcasm, or discharge all the arrows of acrimony from the quiver of

When haply, some less partial eye than ours,
May see that prejudice o'er-rates our powers.
The soundest judge of human merit known,
Is he, who justly estimates his own,

criticism : all is fair notwithstanding, and if he can display his wit or his ingenuity, his liberality is never called in question. But the painter is expected to be all meekness and submission ; to preserve his character for candour, he must cry bravo ! to every blockhead in his profession, and behold the quack and the coxcomb puffed into pre-eminence, without a murmur of disapprobation or discontent.

Yet, why is that censurable in Art, which is laudable in Literature ? Is the painter less sensible than the poet to the interests of Taste ? is it of less consequence to him, or to his country, that the public judgment should be pure or perverted—that the court of general opinion, should be competent to distinguish truth from falsehood—the just claims of Genius from the fraudulent pretensions of Vanity ?

It has been said however, when the painter has ventured to reprove publicly the offenders of his profession, that he should display by his pencil the true principles of his Art ; and oppose the prevalence of a bad Taste, by the example of a better. This argument however, applies not more forcibly to the painter than the poet, and to every other candidate for public favour ; if it be just indeed, it strikes at the root of all criticism ; unless that Art be left entirely in the hands of those who are least qualified to exercise it,

Who drawing vanity's deep veil aside, 45
Surmounting passion, and dispelling pride,
Thro' self-love's magnifying mist defined,
Can take the true dimensions of his mind :

and who have so long used it, as a means of repressing, rather than improving the human faculties.

In matters of Taste, the public is a child that must be instructed by precept as well as example. Taste is something like chess, we cannot become proficient by looking on : the principles of the game must be explained, or the best play is lost upon the spectator. Milton's sublime picture of *Paradise Lost*, hung, for a long time, unnoticed in the exhibition of the press, till Addison pointed out its beauties. Settle was the rival of Dryden, till that great poet taught the public by his precepts, how to judge of his example.

If the public Taste is more enlightened in poetry, than in painting ; it is because, in the one, poets have performed the duty of critics, and in the other, critics have performed the duty of painters. If the general judgment with respect to Art, is less refined in this country, than perhaps, in any other highly civilized country of Europe, it is, because the state of public criticism is at the lowest ebb of ignorance and venality—because all praise has degenerated to puffing, and all reproof to personality—because, of those who are most qualified and interested, to diffuse just notions of excellence and sound principles of Taste, some are restrained

But hard the task! mistaken friends conspire,
In blindfold league, to baffle our desire ; 50
Thro' their false medium seen, what merits rise!
Our pigmy powers appear of giant size,

through diffidence; some, silent through timidity, and others negligent from disgust.

In this general desertion from the service, the interests of Art are left to the officious interference of those who disregard as much as they degrade them. Every scribbler, who can get possession of the critical corner in a newspaper or a magazine, draws his redoubtable pen upon the painters; lays down the law with ludicrous absurdity, and delivers his decisions with ridiculous arrogance. Merit neglects and is libelled by him: the quack courts him and is eulogized. All the reptiles of Taste crawl around those self-appointed dispensers of reputation, to catch an occasional crum of panegyric, and share in the puff of the day.

The public read their effusions without respect, but also without knowledge: they are therefore impressed by their confidence, because they do not perceive their presumption.

The voice of the few who have taste and integrity, whose praise would gratify, and whose censure might amend, has but little influence in counteracting this general corruption of critical morality: it is unheard in the echoes of partial admiration, or drowned in the clamours of virulent abuse.

Thus, are the best interests of the Artist and the Art,

Till giddy in their flattering glass we gaze,
And self-enamoured, deck our brows with bays.

There's not a blockhead on the brink of shame, 55
But has his little atmosphere of fame ;

sacrificed to the capricious or corrupt motives of those, who neither study nor understand them ; and so little enlightened is the public judgment on this subject, that beyond a small circle of sensibility and information, the qualities and claims of British Genius are as unknown as they are disregarded. Even the merits of Reynolds, cannot be said to be sufficiently esteemed or acknowledged, out of the sphere of his profession. His radiance has not yet penetrated the dense fog that hangs upon the public Taste ; and although, to the honour of his brother Artists, they applauded his genius while he lived, as much as they revere his memory now that he is no more ; nevertheless, the mass of his countrymen, even amongst those who are called enlightened, have yet to learn, that a British Artist has rivalled the best age of painting, in some of the most arduous qualities of Art—has equalled Titian in colouring, and surpassed him in grace.

Numerous indeed, are the instances, which might be pointed out, of the want of intelligent and impartial criticism, to direct the public mind in the Arts, and do justice to the genius of the country. The degree to which the powers even of those who appear to stand high in public

Some petty circle, where he shines on high,
A fancied Phœbus, bright in Folly's eye!
To this delusion victims, past redress,
What numbers curse the pencil, and the press! 60

estimation, are sometimes misconceived and undervalued, must very effectually convince the Artist, that, in the words of the poet, he is "condemned in Art to drudge," not "without a rival *but* without a judge." The claims of the present President of the Academy are not more generally understood than those of his predecessor, and his merits have been as inadequately appreciated as they have been rewarded by the public.* Notwithstanding the large space which he fills in his Art, and although, his brethren have justly and honourably placed him at their head, he has good ground of complaint, against the indiscriminating criticism of his day, and may be said to be, in a great degree "defrauded of his fame." Posterity will see him in his merits as well as his defects; will regard him as a great Artist, whose powers place him high in the scale of elevated Art;

* What will be thought of the protection and encouragement afforded to Genius in this great and wealthy empire, when it is stated, that the unremitting exertions of this distinguished Artist, in the higher department of painting, during the period of forty-eight years, (almost half a century), have not, exclusive of his Majesty's patronage, produced to him the sum of six thousand pounds!!!

In wit's worst plight, before the public placed,
And pelted by the populace of Taste !

Too oft, alas ! our friends' applauses rise,
Like fumes of incense at a sacrifice ;

whose pencil has maintained with dignity the historic pretensions of his age, and whose best compositions would do honour to any school or country.

The painter, in laying his productions before the public, has certainly, but little reason to expect, that he shall experience, either enlightened praise or instructive reprehension. A few Connoisseurs and Artists, may perhaps, feel and confess his claims, but in the general perversion and incompetence of criticism, he is doomed, either to blush beneath the "pound brush" panegyric of some injudicious friend, or to suffer under the wholesale censure and unmerited malevolence of a foe.

Thus, praise loses all value in reward, and reproof all virtue in amendment: misplaced applause cannot encourage him who is its object, and unjust censure will not correct him.

Works, which demand the detailed examination of Science, and the deliberate decision of Taste, are dispatched in a paragraph of flippant animadversion, and pass off in a puff or a sarcasm. The sleeping Nymph and Cupid by Hoppner ; the colossal picture of Satan calling his legions

Reject the wreaths thus offered to your eye, 65
As flowers that deck the victim doom'd to die.
Nor think, in Friendship's partial voice you hear
The general sanction sounding in your ear.

But some affect to bound their wiser view,
And trust their cause to the *judicious few*. 70
They seek no praise that's echoed by the crowd,
And hold that Fame herself may talk too loud :

by Laurence, and the Shipwreck by Turner ; though works which have surpassed the most applauded efforts of living Genius in every other country of Europe, and which display, a degree of excellence, that would have been sufficient to establish the reputation of those eminent Artists even in the proudest period of their Art ; excited less attention from the literary critics of the day, than is bestowed on the appearance of a fresh imported figurante at the Opera house, or a new tumbler at Sadler's Wells !

After the fate of Barry, and the more recent example of Fuseli, in the Milton gallery, (an enterprise of Art, to the spirit and magnanimity of which, the Author is happy to bear an impartial though unimportant testimony), what Artist can be expected to devote himself to any great moral or political undertaking of the pencil ? Such exertions as the great room in the Adelphi and the Milton gallery have displayed, were never before made by unprotected individu-

Let them enjoy her whispers, if they will,
While you her loudest trumpet try to fill;
And recognize no title to renown, 75
Till public judgment has decreed the crown.

als in any country. Were Raphael and Michael Angelo to arise amongst us, where would they find a patron or a palace to stimulate and employ their powers? Their Frescos and their Cartoons, would in vain solicit the eye or the attention of the public, and if they could not manufacture furniture-pictures or portraits, familiar scenes or flowers, they would be left in the honourable gloom of poverty and neglect, to exercise for their own amusement, the moral and intellectual qualities of their art; without a hope of commendation from the criticism, or encouragement from the liberality of the age!

How many other striking examples, drawn from the various merits of the time, might be adduced, to prove the total want of science in public criticism, and sensibility in public taste; if the Author could be persuaded that his commendation would be of consequence sufficient to gratify the feelings of his brother Artists, or do justice to those powers, which are not more the object of his competition, than his admiration!

Line 76. *Till public judgment has decreed the crown.*]—
Though many and melancholy have been the examples of neglected merit in modern days, and though public favour is often seduced for a time, by artifice and presumption,

August tribunal ! at whose bar with awe,
E'en Genius bows—obedient to the law !
Grand inquest of the world of wit, and art !
Without appeal, supreme, in every part ! 80

from the arms of Genius and Virtue ; yet, we should take care, how we suffer to be weakened, that salutary respect for the general judgment, which those who are the objects of it should always entertain.

Men of genius, it is true, are often neglected ; but every man that is neglected, must not regard himself as a man of genius. Imbecility must not “ lay that flattering unction to his soul,” nor suffer his vanity to delude him with the notion, that he is a victim to the insensibility of his age. He is always ridiculous, who, disregarded by the public, struggles to cover his mortification under an affected contempt for that judgment, which he would extol if it were given in his favour.

No man is, in his heart, indifferent to public opinion ; for notwithstanding its errors and delusions, its caprices and perversions, to fix it on our side, must always be our noblest incentive, and our most flattering reward. However it may vibrate in the unavoidable concussions of fashion and folly, it is sure in the end, to settle at the right point ; and although, life may pass away in the unfavourable oscillation of Taste, we had better endeavour to correct, than pretend to despise it.

The appetite of the public between the artist and the

What culprits there of every cast and tribe,
 The hue and cry of satire can describe ;
 Provoke their fate in our flagitious times,
 And swell the critics' calender of crimes !
 What libellers of Nature's works endure 85
 The utmost rigours of the connoisseur !
 What painters fall, no patron can relieve !
 What poets cast for death, without reprieve !
What scribblers pardon'd once resume the pen,
Forbearance brave, and rashly rhyme again, 90
 From wit's high-ways, what sturdy vagrants chased !
 And caught by vigilant patrols of Taste !
 In stocks of ridicule their stars accuse,
 Or suffer flagellation in reviews !
 Dull rogues, whose pens, themselves alone expose, 95
 Committing petty larceny in prose,
 Clapt in the bridewell of translation sit,
 And beat, for booksellers, the hemp of wit.

critic, is like that of the individual, between the cook and the physician : if the one is more seductive to poison, than the other is skilful to cure, the palate will soon become vitiated, and the general constitution impaired : yet in neither case, should we despair of the patient ; but rather, seek more judicious prescriptions, and less pernicious food.

Yet undismay'd ! though sad examples rise,
Ambition braves all dangers for the prize ; 100

Line 100. *Ambition braves all dangers for the prize ;*—
When the evils of failure are compared with the advantages of success, it is extraordinary, that so many are found willing to embark on the perilous enterprizes of Taste and Literature. What can the most brilliant genius propose to himself at present in these pursuits, as the adequate reward of unremitting toil and inexhaustible anxiety ? Is it fortune ? The humblest talents are more lucrative — the meanest calling more secure. “ Il n’y a point d’art si mécanique, ni de si vile condition, où les avantages ne soient plus surs, plus prompt, et plus solide.”* Is it fame ? alas ! that is still less within the grasp of ambition. For profit he contends only with the living, but for praise he must struggle also with the dead ; and the ghost of departed Genius rises up, like that of Banquo to Macbeth, to thrust him from the stool of reputation.

“ Pascitur in vivis Livor : post fata quiescit.”

Genius for life at law, puts in his claim,
And prosecutes the chancery suit of fame ;
Yet while he lives altho’ the court denies,
The master Time awards it—when he dies.
The powerful propensity towards the Arts, which operates

* La Bruyere.

He knows the court inclines to mercy's side,
And puts him on his country to be tried.

Though merit in the race of fame may fail,
The quack still cross him, and the puff prevail ;

on some minds, may indeed be said to be a species of fascination. We cannot resist their allurements, though we are certain to be the victims of our devotion. But there is something in the chase, which compensates for the precariousness of the prize ; and if an attachment to the Muses diminishes our chance of wealth, it also lessens our desire for it. Taste is, perhaps, the best corrective of avarice ; and that probably, is one reason why, in commercial states, it is so little esteemed.

The Muse and Mammon cannot be worshipped at the same altar. A love for the Arts excludes all grosser passions from the soul. Taste is the Angel that drives the money changers out of the temple of Mind, and leaves it to the possession of every human virtue.

They who in the present age, pay their addresses to the Arts, are certainly, the most disinterested of all suitors : painters and poets indeed, may be considered the true dramatis personæ in the " All for Love, or the World well lost," of real life. The Muses have been commonly portionless in all countries, but here, they are not only without a penny, but an expectation. In other times they could at least boast of a reversion of respect on the attainment of

Though party zeal a moment may engage, 105
And fashion thrust some fool upon the stage;
Some lucky dunce, who struts with braggart air,
And wonders, in his heart, how he came there !
Yet judgment comes at last, to check his course,
And put the penalties of Taste in force ; 110
Unmasks the cheat usurping merit's mien,
While Sense reviving hoots him from the scene.

Court then the public wreath, but do not aim
To shoot by sudden effort into fame ;
Fruit of life's autumn ! fame's a tardy boon, 115
That's always blighted, when it blows too soon.

merit, but now, there is hardly a contingency of honour or emolument in the career of Literature and Art.

The prudent parent weeps over the fate of his child who yields to the infatuation of Taste : he regards him as cut off from all hopes of wealth and consequence, and condemned to pine out a life of disregarded toil in penury and disappointment.

Line 115. *Fruit of life's autumn ! fame's a tardy boon,*]
—Premature fame is dangerous in all Arts ; but in painting it is particularly pernicious : it unsettles our ideas of excellence, and disturbs our steadiness of application : it checks

The crop that ripens early, oft displays
But forward feebleness, and fading bays.
Observe, you'll find, 'tis prudent Nature's plan,
Through all her works, plant, animal, or man, 120

us on the ascent, to persuade us that we are on the summit; and few can proceed again with the same ardour, when they have discovered the mistake.

He who obtains early, and with little effort, what others can hope to derive only from long and arduous perseverance, will readily suppose himself a superior being; and soon relax in those exertions, which are necessary, not only to gain new ground, but to keep that which he has already occupied.

The history of the Arts affords many examples of those, who have fallen a sacrifice to that vanity and presumption, which always result from a reputation too early to be merited, and too sudden to be safe.

While the fancied prodigy exults in admiration of the little palace of panegyric in which he is placed, the structure totters at the first touch of Time, and levels in its fall, both his powers and his hopes.

There is a particular description of connoisseurs, who seem to take great pleasure in catching precocious ability in those traps of reputation. Having a general hostility to established merit, they are ever on the watch for a wonder or a prodigy; and as they make use of the dead to depreciate the genius of the living, so, they raise up the young

That each, proportion'd to its size and worth,
Should quicken long, and labour into birth;
By slow degrees, to full perfection rise,
As time maturing, sap and strength supplies.

Let no vain prodigy your spleen excite, 125
Though swift ascending in a rocket flight,
The mob's meridian he may gain, and raise,
In vulgar minds, the fever heat of praise :
But should a star of steady ray appear,
That glows with innate lustre from its sphere, 130
Be you the first its splendours to proclaim,
And place it in the galaxy of fame.

Scorn the low passions which the Muse disgrace,
And stamp her sons an irritable race;
Nor e'er to self-stung jealousy submit, 135
That mental fiend, that pest of love and wit !

Artist, only for the purpose of putting down the old.
As soon as this end is answered, the prodigy is suppressed in his turn : and his patrons, like faithless lovers, having seduced him by flattery from honest application, desert him without ceremony or remorse.

These graphic gallants often effect the ruin of modest

Which still with rancour of a rival hears,
Marks him a foe, and slanders while she fears.
In open, honest emulation claim
The palm of excellence, the prize of fame; 140
Unblamed the glorious contest, though you try,
A friend, or e'en a father to outvie;
But banish envy as a baleful guest,
The meanest, basest passion of the breast;
Which like the serpent brood in Sin's foul womb, 145
Still gnaws the wretch's heart, who gives it room;
To its own shame each tortured sense employs,
Corrodes his peace, and poisons all his joys.

Where Envy sways, no virtue long survives,
Beneath that deadly night-shade nothing thrives: 150
No generous feeling can put forth a flower,
Nor Taste withstand its sterilizing power.

The sons of Genius, like the Jews, we trace,
In every clime, a kind of outcast race;

merit, and credulous inexperience: they are a kind of critical debauchees, who prowl around in all the purlieus of Taste to deflower the virginity of Genius.

That prudence fears and flies, that fortune spurns, 155
 And pride and folly persecute by turns :
 For Mammon's sordid ministry unfit,
 And hated for the heresy of wit ;
 Their pious zeal, the sects of dulness shew,
 And all combine against the common foe. 160
 Thus by an host assail'd, the tribes of mind,
 Apollo's chosen people of mankind !
 Should stand united in their own defence,
 The steady guards of Virtue, Taste, and Sense ; [own,
 One common cause, their heads, their hearts should
 Nor madly point the shafts by malice thrown ; 166
 To pride and dulness, worth's strong hold betray,
 And 'gainst themselves their frantic passions play ;

Line 170. *And 'gainst themselves their frantic passions play ;*]
 —Poets have long been described as an irritable race
 “genus irritabile vatum,” and it is to be feared, that in the
 present day, there is some disposition to extend that cha-
 racter to painters also.

The justice of the imputation however, may in both
 cases be questioned. If the contentions of poets and pain-
 ters, appear to be more frequent and violent, than those of
 any other class or calling ; it is, because they are more
 public, and consequently more noticed.

The quarrels of Parnassus are exposed to every eye, and

Like ships in gales, that running foul, perform
The winds worst rage, and aggravate the storm. 170

Now choose some noble theme in which conspire,
All action's energy, and passion's fire,

as they are generally conducted with more wit and less bloodshed, than most other contests, they seldom fail to attract the curiosity, and contribute to the amusement, of the lower regions of civilized life. The dull dissensions of other professions excite no interest, and pass off without observation: but if they are less public, they are not less prevalent; and though they are less entertaining, they are not less acrimonious.

Lawyers, divines, and physicians, may indulge themselves for years, in all the virulent varieties of legal, clerical, and medical animosity, and the public suffer them to fight it out, without any disposition to attend, or attempt to interfere; but the sparrings of the Muses are interesting to all the amateurs of intellectual pugilism: the arena of taste is always crowded with curiosity, for whatever may be the cause of the quarrel, the combat is sure to be productive of sport.

It might be supposed however, that the little bickerings of a body of Artists, could not supply a very amusing subject of general attention; and that an occasional disagreement might arise amongst them, respecting the management

Where not alone to please the curious eye,
 Mere mimic toils, shall barren bliss supply;
 But strong example may with Art combine, 175
 And moral strike in each instructive line.
 Pour'd from your hand, let ancient story flow,
 And Brutus breathing on your canvas glow;
 Not he, who stain'd with Cæsar's blood his fame,
 And in the assassin sunk the patriot's name, 180

of a public Institution, which they are allowed the exclusive honour of maintaining by their labours, without occasioning the imputation of a contentious propensity beyond the ordinary measure of human frailty. But we find, that the sons of Taste, are not allowed the common privileges of corporative sensibility. The smallest indication of commotion amongst them excites very general surprise and animadversion; and they, who are by no means solicitous to contribute to their good humour, by administering the efficacious sweeteners of encouragement and kindness, are the first to condemn their irritability, and cry out in a very complimentary amazement,

Tantæne animis cœlestibus iræ!

It must be confessed indeed, that whatever neglect the public may shew to their interests, their disputes are favoured with a degree of attention, which is very flattering to their importance at least, if not to their reputation.

Line 182. *And in the assassin sunk the patriot's name,*—
 In mentioning thus irreverently, the celebrated character

But chaste Lucretia's bold avenger, he,
Who fired by friendship—burning to be free,
High raised the reeking point—to heaven address'd,
Warm from the wound in outraged beauty's breast,

here alluded to, the Author fears, he may be thought to offend against that sacred spirit of liberty, of which Brutus has been so long considered, as having furnished in the act above censured, one of the most illustrious examples. The rigid genius of republicanism rises to vindicate the virtue of her son, and the shade of an immortal bard appears to frown indignant upon his presumption, who dares to dispute the glory of the hero who rose

“Refulgent from the stroke of Cæsar's fate.”

AKENSIDE.

But notwithstanding the honours which poetry and patriotism have combined to confer upon the ancient Roman, the Author (though he confesses himself to be one of those who hold the cause of freedom firmly to their heart), could never admire the conduct of the younger Brutus in this instance, considering it with reference either to the man or the patriot.

That kind of public virtue is surely but little worthy of esteem, which begins with ingratitude and ends in assassination: which shakes off the inconvenient shackles of common morality; and triumphs in the desolation of all those feelings which humanize the heart of man, and which seem to have been supplied by Nature, as the necessary

In bursting rage his smother'd soul betray'd, 185
And damn'd proud Tarquin to the infernal shade.
By magic powers revived, again he glows,
Again denounces freedom's—virtue's foes,
Assumes once more the hero's—patriot's part,
And strikes new terrors to the tyrant's heart. 190

Or give to view Virginia, luckless maid !
To slavery doom'd, and brutal lust betray'd :

corrective of passions, which would otherwise render him unpitiful and ferocious.

When a people have become so degraded, as to submit to the despotism of an individual, the stroke that levels the tyrant, will not destroy the tyranny. Men seldom become slaves till they are unworthy to be free : till all the nobler virtues of society are expelled as Utopian and impracticable, and servility and venality have tainted the human character to the core. The patriot who grasps the poniard instead of the sword, is not much to be depended on ; and he who will stab his friend for the public advantage, will not hesitate to stab his foe for his own.

To sanction assassination, under any circumstances, is to furnish a pretext for atrocities, as inconsistent with liberty, as incompatible with public happiness. It is to let loose upon society the worst of human passions, treachery, cowardice, and revenge ; and to facilitate their operations, by

The father paint, a rigid, Roman soul!
A Stoic, spurning Nature's strong controul!

covering them with the mask of patriotism and the cloak of public virtue.

Richardson, in his account of pictures and statues in Italy, mentions an unfinished bust of Brutus, by Michael Angelo, upon which appeared the following inscription from the pen of Cardinal Bembo :

“ Dum Bruti effigiem sculptor de marmore ducit,

“ In mentem sceleris venit, et abstinuit.”

Line 193. *Or give to view Virginia, luckless maid !*]—The subjects from ancient history which have been mentioned in the text, are not recommended as new to the pencil, for they have been often painted ; but are alluded to, as illustrative of those qualities, which the Author conceives, will always be exhibited with most impression on the graphic scene.

A great work in painting or poetry, should be conducted with a view to moral effect, as well as to rational amusement : trifles in both Arts, may be allowed to be uninstractive, provided they are innocently entertaining : but he who spends much time and much toil, in the completion of a work, which inculcates no moral truth, strengthens no religious impression, and promotes no patriotic virtue, whatever may be the amusive captivations of his skill, must be considered, as misemploying his powers, and neglecting a

Who to his daughter's life preferr'd her fame, 195
And gave her death, to rescue her from shame.

noble opportunity of rendering the pleasures of Taste subservient to the principles of utility.

When we reflect, how completely the independence and reputation of a state, depend upon its public spirit and morality, it is surprising, that any means should be neglected, which might operate to preserve and purify those prime agents of national felicity. In a free government like ours, the Arts might be made a most effective instrument for the promotion of patriotic feelings ; and when judiciously employed, in recalling the noblest acts of ancient and modern times, would furnish a succession of powerful allurements to the practice of every public and private virtue.

To apply these stimulatives, is indeed, the proudest and most appropriate of their functions : Man, and Nature, are the great objects of the painter ; and although he is competent to ascend with the poet, to the wildest regions of fancy, and people with a new creation, an imaginary world, yet, human events and human passions, furnish him with the materials most congenial with the powers of his art, as well as, most conducive to those moral effects, which it is so admirably calculated to produce.

Subjects connected with history, which illustrate the actions of the sage, the hero, and the patriot, are those, which appear to be most worthy of the pencil in a free

Or should high feats of late achievement fire,
And patriot zeal the pencil's toils inspire ;

state. To preserve to future times the image of him who has been the guardian, or the benefactor of his country ; to re-act, as it were, for the delight and instruction of posterity, those heroic deeds, by which, valour and virtue have established her felicity and brightened her renown ; to impress upon the rising generation, those examples of magnanimity, which may kindle the fire of enthusiasm and make them

“ Live o'er each scene, and be what they behold ;”

POPE.

those are the only occupations of the painter, by which he can hope, to rise to the exalted level of his subject, and take his place in the temple of immortality, amongst those great characters which he has celebrated.

Subjects, merely poetical and fanciful, cannot rank in dignity with those great achievements of the pencil: they may shew all the powers of the Artist, but they do not display all the impression of the Art. If in the fairy land of imagination, and the visions of romance, the painter and the poet may exhibit all the strength of human genius ; it is more admirable in its power than its application : it is Hercules pitching the bar, or throwing the disk ; not strangling the Nemean lion, nor destroying the monsters of his age.

Let it not be imagined, that the Author is disposed to

Pass o'er the proud exploits of Greece and Rome,
And call your country's heroes from the tomb. 200

diminish the due estimation of those, who without any particular solicitude as to instruction, are content to administer delight; and who cultivate the flowers of Genius without much attention to the fruit. Their influence is valuable and virtuous, though in a subordinate degree: he who pleases society innocently, by the intervention of Taste, is next in esteem, to him, who by the same means, improves it. The useful may not be always ornamental, but the ornamental is always useful; and they who appear to be of little consequence to our interest, are often important to our happiness. The Author would be sorry to depreciate the Loves and Graces of poetry and art, or to restrict the wing of Genius, from those daring flights into the boundless regions of invention, where the human faculties appear to shake off the trammels of mortality, and soar beyond the attraction of our terrestrial sphere. He would however avow, what he conceives to be the superior claims of him who directs the current of his powers, to refresh and fertilize the scene which it enlivens and adorns. "Qui miscuit utile dulci," whose genius is a light that does not shine with a barren splendour, but pervades the soul while it plays upon the sense: which ripens the fruit while it calls forth the flowers of Taste, and invigorates in every heart the vegetation of virtue.

An eminent poet of the present day (Mr. Hayley) touch-

Behold! in gorgeous triumph crowding by,
Britannia's glories press on fancy's eye;

ing on subjects proper for the painter, has strongly censured the use of allegory in Art; and termed, not unhappily, those pictures in which it is employed, "painted riddles;" this, however, seems a condemnation too unqualified.

Allegory, like all the other instruments of painting and poetry, may be injudiciously managed; but in skilful hands, it is capable of being made an ingenious and efficient vehicle of refined sentiment and moral truth. The painter however, should be cautious in the use of it; an allegory which does not explain itself, to a spectator of ordinary discernment and information, is an enigma, that conceals the truth which it was intended to display. The impression of the subject is weakened by the effort that is required to understand it; and he whose work must be accompanied by an explanatory dissertation, may deserve the praise of learning and ingenuity, but he will neither command the attention nor affect the feelings of the public.

An allegorical poem or picture, ill contrived, is a maze of meaning, in which, we do not much like to wander, although we may be presented with the clue.

But it is not enough, that an allegory be clear and expressive, it should be constructed also, to dignify, enforce, and adorn whatever it is employed to display: in Art, it must be picturesque as well as appropriate; graceful as well as just. Whatever merit the allegory of "Sin and

From heaven's high seats, indignant sages glow,
To see what trophies thankless states bestow ;

Death" may possess in poetry, it would be offensive to the highest degree in painting, if represented according to the description of Milton. Every eye would turn with disgust, from the more defined deformities of the monster brood ; nor could the highest excellence of execution, compensate for the detestable character of the subject.

Critics in general, have not been averse to the introduction of allegory in painting, and some, have recommended it without being at all sensible of those limits within which only, it can be gracefully or effectually employed. Of this, Algarotti affords a conspicuous instance. Speaking of the superior skill of the ancients in the use of allegory, he refers, for an example, to a picture painted by Galatin, in which, a number of poets were represented, greedily quenching their thirst in the waters gushing from the mouth of Homer.

Now, whatever justness there may be in the figure, which represents the ancient father of verse, as the fountain of poetry to all succeeding bards, the Author conceives, that the manner in which the painter has in this instance allegorised it, borders upon the ridiculous, if not upon the disgusting.

However true it may be, that poets and critics, in all ages, have been ready to swallow with delight, every thing that has flowed from the Mæonian spring ; yet, to exhi-

From every Muse their unpaid honours claim, 205
Upbraid our coldness, and demand their fame.

bit the sublime bard, under the influence of a poetical emetic, and encircled by an immense crowd of thirsty votaries, with outstretched necks and open mouths, struggling to profit by the operation, excites ideas and associations, but little favourable to the dignity of the subject ; and presents to the eye, a picture, for which, an appropriate pendent is to be drawn, only from the delicacy of religious veneration, exemplified in the worship of Thibet.

Line 201. *Pass o'er the proud exploits of Greece and Rome,*]
—There is a patriotism of the pencil and the lyre, as well as of the sword ; and it is as much the duty of the painter and the poet, to celebrate the fame, as it is the duty of the soldier and the sailor, to protect the interests of their country.

To select our subjects from the splendid exploits of other states, is, in some measure, to depreciate the glories of our own : it is to enter into foreign service, and employ those talents in spreading the renown of strangers, which ought to be devoted to commemorate the valour and the virtue of our countrymen.

If illiberal and impolitic laws, have driven some part of the population of this great empire, to “ seek honour even in the cannon’s mouth ” beneath the standards of other nations, let us not, by a course of neglect and indifference to their claims, not less illiberal and impolitic, exclude the

Had Greece, ye Gods ! in all her laurell'd host,
Or 'mongst her sons, immortal Rome to boast,

population of Taste, from the service of their country, in the fields of Poetry and Art.

When will the bigotry of religion, of politics, and of criticism, cease to corrupt the christianity, pervert the patriotism, and depress the genius of our age ? When shall we discover that persecution is not piety ; that party is not principle, and that pedantry is not Taste ?

Line 208. *Upbraid our coldness, and demand their fame.*] —Either, those powerful incentives to public virtue, which the Arts are calculated to supply, and which the ancients so judiciously directed, have lost all influence in modern times, or the governments of the present age, are to be condemned for so strangely neglecting to employ them. Is the honour of a statue no longer worthy of the ambition of a great man ? Has the hero now, no wish, to see his name or his image, connected with the lasting memorials of his country ? Are the Nelsons, the St. Vincents, and the Moores of our days, composed of stuff so different from the warriors of antiquity, as to be insensible to the homage of Taste ?—to feel no proud exultation in beholding their triumphs perpetuated by the powers of the pencil, where each might view himself, like Miltiades of old, the foremost hero of some glorious groupe ?

If they are alive to the impressions of renown, as well as the impulse of interest ; if they have the sensibility, as

But half the heroes, statesmen, bards divine,
That bright in Albion's happier annals shine ; 210

well as the valour of the Greeks ; why are they ungraced by those inspiring distinctions which roused and rewarded the disinterested enthusiasm of other times ? Why are the genius and the gratitude of the country alike defrauded of an opportunity, of paying in public honours, the purest tribute to public Virtue ?

There is no hope for the Arts when they are no longer held worthy to co-operate in rewarding the benefactors of their country. They may exclaim with Othello, that "their occupation is gone," if they are deprived of their functions in the temple of immortality—degraded from their high and ancient office in the administration of renown.

If Vanity and Avarice are the all-powerful agents of modern heroism ; if they are the only levers of patriotism which a ministerial Archimedes thinks it necessary to employ, not only the age of chivalry, but the age of taste is gone for ever.

Amongst the votaries of politics and war, we have scattered titles and pensions with a liberal hand : we have debauched the Dan'æ of modern reputation with a shower of gold ; and distributed stars, in such glittering abundance, as to form in the hemisphere of honour, a *via lactea* of lustre, from which nothing shines conspicuous, distinct or pre-eminent. We have done every thing that pride

What wond'rous works had grateful Taste essay'd!

What monumental miracles display'd!

and selfishness can desire for the individual ; but nothing that glory and patriotism demand for the state.

What civilized nation of the ancient or modern world has less endeavoured to stimulate its genius or perpetuate its fame? Where are our temples and public halls, dedicated to honour and national glory—decorated with the trophies of our conquests and the animated representations of those scenes in which they were achieved—dignified by the statues of our captains, our statesmen, our poets, and our philosophers, producing exultation in the native, admiration in the stranger, and enthusiasm in the rising race? A melancholy memorial is set up occasionally, in the gloom of St. Paul's, or amongst the tombs of Westminster Abbey, in which, the genius of the Sculptor is cramped in a commonplace repetition of hackneyed attributes and exhausted emblems; and is never called upon, but to succeed the sepulchral pageantries of the undertaker, in paying the last honours to departed heroism.

Why are the testimonials of national gratitude delayed till their object is insensible to the glory they confer? One trophy erected to the living, would inspire more ardour, and display more generosity, than a dozen monuments devoted to the dead. A triumph decreed to the victor in his country's cause, which should lead him, to be crowned by the hand of patriotism, in the temple of public virtue, would fire the

What trophied arches ! temples, taught to rise !
What sculptured columns proudly pierced the skies !
What Art achieved—what rocks to statues sprung ;
What climes had echoed, and what pæans rung. 216

young mind with more enthusiasm of emulation, than a funeral procession, which closes the career of the hero, and conducts the victim of his valour to the tomb. The grandeur of the latter ceremonial is diminished by the impression of its gloom : we are taught to moralize, as well as to commemorate : we are irresistibly struck with the vanity of all human greatness, and exclaim with the poet,

“ The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

A monument to departed greatness, is a sacred debt due by society, to the memory of those who have done honour to their country : a debt too, which the Author laments, that in so many glaring instances, we have not had sufficient patriotic probity to pay. But why should public gratitude appear always in mourning, like a widow weeping over the urn of her lord ? Why should not the hero behold his fame in the animated offerings of joyful celebration, instead of contemplating in gloomy prospect, the tardy tribute of national sensibility poured upon his coffin, and the long delayed laurel waving on the tomb ?

Posterity, when reading in the faint page of history, the heroic deeds of their gallant ancestors, will look round with astonishment and regret, to find no adequate memorials of their worth ; no honourable trophies erected by our

Valour, of old, and public virtue found,
In grateful soil, their honours rising round :
Prolific soon the seeds of worth became,
And merit fruitful; ripen'd into fame; 220

grateful Taste, to celebrate the virtues of those, who have defended their country by their arms, refined it by their Arts, and enlightened it by their wisdom.

Line 215. *What trophied arches ! temples, taught to rise !*]
—The ancients were fully convinced of the salutary influence of those works, which to the ignorant and superficial observer, appear to be useless and expensive ornaments. They knew that grandeur and magnificence, displayed in national objects, produced many of the advantages with few of the evils of luxury ; and not only called forth the powers, but excited the patriotism of a people.

A man's country, like his mistress, is not the less attractive for being adorned with taste. Luxury, is a mighty current of civilization, which confined to the channel of national magnificence, not only, enlivens and adorns a state, but feeds all those lesser streams of refinement, which are necessary to the cultivation of Genius. It is only when it overflows its banks, and diffuses its waters on all sides, that it lays waste the growth of Virtue, and stagnating in the reedy pools and marshes of society, becomes noxious and pestilential.

Public splendour leads to liberality and patriotism, private splendour, to vanity and selfishness. The meanest

To wreath the patriot's brow, and dart sublime,
The beams of glory through the gloom of time,
Each polish'd Art the state exciting fired,
And every Muse to some bright toil inspired :

subject of the state takes a pride in contemplating the stately edifices, which are devoted to her civil, political, and religious institutions. He experiences a pleasure unmixed with sordid feelings—in which selfish considerations have no share. He must be either a clod or a critic, who can behold St. Peter's or St. Paul's, unmoved by sensations, which expand the heart and elevate the character of man.

But there are some self-applauding sons of Simplicity and Nature, who smile at such sophisticated notions ; and look with a jaundiced eye, on all the refinements of society. While their philosophic admiration is excited to eloquence on the contrivance of an ant-hill, or the economy of a cockle, they have no taste for the magnificence of man. The dim dawn of ingenuity in an insect, is a wonder worthy of their scientific curiosity; but the full blaze of Genius in the pride of created beings, excites their attention, only to experience their contempt.

Another tribe, of methodistical moralists, lament with great feeling, the *factitious* state to which society has been reduced by its refinements. They groan in spirit at the abominations of human grandeur, and sigh over the depravity that results from Taste. For them, the millennium of

Majestic peopling every public place, 225
By Taste created, rose her marble race ;
The vaunting column to the clouds convey'd
The hero's praise, in sculptured pride display'd ;

felicity is postponed, till the monstrous inequalities of luxury shall be levelled by an agrarian law : till mankind shall truly become a swinish multitude, and every hog grunt in his appropriate stye.

What can equal the folly of him, who believes that man may remain civilized without luxury, or rational without refinement ! Who thinks, that knowledge will be preserved when the springs of Art and Science are suppressed ; and that we may continue to feed upon the fruit after we have cut down the tree !

This was not the wisdom of those, whose institutions and whose maxims we have been taught to imitate and revere. The Greeks, in their best period, recognized in the genius of man, the glory of terrestrial agents—the most interesting of the phænomena of Nature—as beneficial in its influence, as beautiful in its operations. To give it scope and efficacy was their study ; and the liberal public spirit which distinguished all classes of that extraordinary people, directed it to the noblest purposes of national advantage. Proud of the superior splendour of their country, that ideal personage, the state, was the constant object of aggrandisement and decoration. While plainness and simplicity, characterized the manners and habitations of individuals,

High, on a trophied car, conspicuous placed,
The victor chief, the gorgeous triumph graced; 230
From glory's height exulting to look down,
While every face reflected his renown.

their public edifices were gorgeous and magnificent : their memorials of public virtue were splendid and inspiring ; calculated to kindle the enthusiasm of the citizen, and suitable to the dignified gratitude of a great nation.

Amongst the Greeks therefore, the Arts were not so much objects of private gratification, as of public interest. They were employed as the most powerful stimulants of piety and patriotism—commissioned to confer distinction upon those who were conspicuous for valour, for wisdom, or for virtue.

But even this honourable use of the Arts, became but a secondary consideration, as soon as the sensibility of the Greeks was sufficiently awakened to the impressions of beauty and grace : the production of excellence, the perfection of Taste, were then the great ends in view, and the application of the Arts to religious and national purposes, was but the means of promoting them. The Sculptor and the Painter soon rose to be the rivals of their subjects, and the hero and the demigod were content, to share in the general admiration, with the Artist and his work.

The productions of Taste and Genius were found to be not only powerful incentives to great actions, but prime

By these excitements fired, the soul of worth,
Puts all the patriot—all the hero forth,
To virtue's bright career devotes his days, 235
Foresees his fame, and fills the world with praise.

No more delay'd, let tardy honours fall,
Like vain escutcheons glittering on a pall,
When public love lamenting merit's doom,
Leads the funereal triumph to the tomb; 240

agents of social and scientific improvement. Philosophy and feeling were alike interested to favour their advancement. A statue or a picture gave celebrity to a city or a state;* and a great Artist was considered as a national ornament—a public benefactor, whom all were bound to honour and reward.

What a contrast to this picture, do we find in the apathy and avarice of modern times! What a reverse of the medal, even in this great empire, which should set an example of liberal policy and enlightened wisdom to the world! As a nation, we are as ignorant of the utility as we are insensible

* Pliny, in his thirty-sixth Book, speaking of a Venus by Praxitiles, which the people of Gnidus would not part with even to discharge *their national debt*, says, "*illo enim signo Praxitiles nobilitavit Gnidum.*"

On worth's cold relics, late confers the crown,
And pays—with a post obit of renown.
For living virtue let the statue rise—
The arch extend—the column pierce the skies—
The canvas in commemorative glow, 245
Each proud exploit of patriot ardour shew;
Recall her triumphs to Britannia's view,
And in her Arts, her ancient fame renew.

Shall Britain then, the boast of Time's career!
The sufferer's refuge, and the tyrant's fear; 250
Whose conquering flags on every shore unfurl'd,
Proclaim her pride, and umpire of the world!
Shall Britain then, without a sigh, resign
To Gaul's proud sons the glories of the Nine;
Content, ambition's better laurel yield, 255
And fly, defeated in the graphic field!

to the beauty of the Arts, and have neither the policy that promotes, nor the refinement that respects them. Unexcited, unprotected, and unpraised, without honour for dignity, or emolument for ease, they are left to struggle amid the contentions of common life; and obliged to practice the mercenary maxims of a trade, without the security of its comforts, or the consolation of its independance.

Enrich'd by commerce, and renown'd in arms,
Has Taste no trophies, and has Art no charms ?
When Reason's eye regarding Glory's blaze,
With power prismatic separates all its rays ; 260
We find the brightest colours there that glow,
Are those the Artist and the Bard bestow.
The warrior's fame with comet splendour glares,
And round its orb a sanguine circle wears ;
But Genius, like the spotless planet bright, 265
Extends through Time a clear unclouded light.

What now, of all that Rome or Athens graced !
In war or conquest—wealth or splendour placed ;
Their Gods—their godlike heroes, princes, powers,
Imperial triumphs, and time-braving towers ! 270
What now, of all that social life refined,
Subdued—enslaved—or civilized mankind,
What now remains—save what the Muse imparts,
Relate their ruins, and unfold their Arts ?
Warriors, whose deeds resounding climes confess'd, 275
Behold their triumphs to a coin compress'd ;
Their debt of fame, to Taste's pure trophies own
Still live in verse, and breathe in sculptured stone.
Consuls and Quæstors, Senators and Kings,
Like forms in crystal, fix'd with meaner things, 280

Preserved through ages, in their Arts enshrined,
 Still claim the curious homage of mankind.
 O ! let not Albion then neglect her arts,
 Nor slight her interest in the Muses' hearts;
 As what the generous hand on earth has given, 285
 To boundless wealth accumulates in heaven;
 So, the rapt Nine, their grateful stores display,
 And transient love with lasting praise repay.

But lo ! to more than rapture fired, the Muse,
 Prophetic, in no distant vision views, 290

Line 290. *Prophetic, in no distant vision views.*]—How-
 ever prophetic the Author may have imagined himself to
 be in his poetry, he must confess, he does not now think
 that there is ground to be quite so sanguine in his prose.
 The more he considers the invincible apathy to the interests
 of literature and art, which has through so long a period,
 characterised every fluctuation of our manners, and every
 change of our administrations ; the more he feels convinced,
 that the general torpor has continued too long to be sud-
 denly removed.

There is also, some reason to fear, that besides these
 causes which in all countries impede the progress of pure
 Taste, there are here, obstructions to its advancement, which
 may be considered, as peculiar to our political constitution

When war's wild uproar round our isle shall cease,
And heart-warm Plenty crown returning peace ;
When hostile nations, now, no longer foes,
Shall turn to seek in tranquil toils, repose ;

and commercial character. The pursuits of politics and commerce, though highly important to our freedom and our wealth, are but little favourable to that refinement which results from great sensibility of feeling, and high intellectual cultivation. They are schools for men of business, not academies for men of taste. They sharpen all our coarser faculties, but the polished edge of Genius is turned and blunted in the rough contact they afford.

Trade and politics, are become mighty gulphs, in which, all minor interests are swallowed up and lost. To the busy votaries of wealth and power, all other pursuits appear to be of no moment : they appreciate every thing, in proportion as it is subservient to the attainment of those great objects, and revere no talents, but those, which will enable you to get a fortune, or a place.

Unhappily for the Arts and Sciences, the whole population of this great empire, is embarked in these two comprehensive occupations. The trade of politics, or the politics of trade, may be said to engross all ranks and degrees. There is no man so high, or so low, as to be removed out of the sphere of their influence. They occupy all hearts and all heads ; usurp all our faculties and powers : they cling to us in public and in private, supply the only objects of

To grace high deeds, in grateful Arts engage, 295
Consult their glory, and forget their rage.
Then—then shall Britain own each Muse's charms,
And fondly fold their offspring in her arms ;

our ambition, and the constant topics of our conversation. At the tables of the great or the gay, the rich or the poor, you find the same subjects of discussion and contention : politics and trade, in anxious alternation : the ministry or the money market—the intrigues of an election, or the terms of a loan. “*Ab ovo usque ad mala*,” even our drawing-rooms are converted into debating societies, and every company seems a committee from the Commons or the Change.

How is the voice of Taste to be heard in this politico-commercial din ? What Orpheus of the modern lyre can charm to silence or attention, this Rhodopean rout ?

If the degree of estimation in which the Arts are held, be considered, the best criterion, by which to judge of the refinement of a nation, as well as of the knowledge of an individual, how shall we appreciate the character of the age in which we live ? In what civilized period of the world have they been less generally esteemed, or less liberally rewarded ? Without a chance of honour, or a prospect of competence ; without motive or means of exertion, they are allowed to droop in the drudgery of daily expedients for support ; to pine over the misapplication of their

With ardent love past negligence atone,
Redeem her Taste, and dignify her throne. 300
Then, sure, no more with Europe's cares oppress'd,
Fruit of their toils ! the well-poised world at rest,

powers in hopeless inutility, and find neither consideration with the public, nor protection from the state.

The higher classes of society, engrossed in pleasure and politics, have no time to attend to the interests of Taste ; or if a few more liberal and enlightened individuals from amongst them, step forward in their behalf, they have only the mortification to experience a more convincing proof of the general insensibility, in the little which their zeal and their example can effect.

But of all the characters in society, whose habits, prejudices and views, render them callous to the allurements of the Arts, the political man of business (as he is called), appears to be the most hostile to their interests : he wears a husk not penetrable to the touch of Taste. The creature of routine and detail, while putting a political document through the formalities of office, he fancies himself the prop of the state, and the depositary of all human wisdom. With him, the minister of the day is the only man of sense, and the borough-monger the only man of consequence. The composition of a state paper is the highest effort of human wit, and the management of a political intrigue the ne plus ultra of human sagacity.

Occupied in working the courser wheels of the social

Her liberal statesmen shall her Arts sustain,
Nor unprotected Genius plead in vain :
Convinced, when power's proud fabrics shall decay, 305
Systems dissolve, and empires pass away,

machine, he neither sees nor comprehends its more delicate movements; and is quite insensible to the influence of those remote springs and interior agents, which are often the most important in their effects, though the least palpable in their operation.

If the commercial man of business is rarely a man of Taste, he is, almost always, a man of liberality: though he may not see their utility in its full extent, he is willing to allow the Arts a share in the great concern of society; and sometimes, is pleased to be a collector, without pretending to be a connoisseur. But the political man of business is commonly as devoid of sensibility as of science. As deficient of generosity as of genius. His habitual dullness is roused into wrath at the mention of Genius or Taste, and he considers all liberality to learning and merit, as a provoking diversion of those funds, which he would more usefully and honourably employ in a patriotic profusion of pensions, sinecures, and subsidies.

This is he, who has been the characteristic and the curse of our government through all its administrative fluctuations. This is the leech, who sticks to the vitals of public prosperity, and what he cannot gorge himself, takes care shall not be given to Science or to Virtue. This is he,

When Time and tempest, each, their rage perform,
Learning shall brave, and Arts outlive the storm.

And you ! for whom the trembling Muse essays
Her feeble voice, and dares didactic lays ; 310

who dams up the stream of national munificence, lest it should flow down and fructify the thirsty plains of Taste : who sees no blemish in power ; no vice in wealth ; and no virtue in poverty : who saps the spirit of independence, and sneers down the diffidence of merit : who checks and stifles the first birth of generous feeling in high characters : who turns aside the liberality of the statesman, and intercepts the beneficence of the prince.*

From the lower ranks of official insensibility, from the cold tribe of subservients, desk-drudges and deputies, the baleful spirit of this character, rising like a noxious vapour, pervades the higher regions of authority, and degrades by its illiberal influence, the noblest functions and faculties. What a blank of benevolence, has its operation occasioned

* The Author has met with some of these modern Goths, who openly avowed their disregard of the Arts ; who declared that they knew of no advantage which a nation derived from pictures and statues, and that they would oppose the appropriation of any part of the public money to the cultivation of such objects.

Ye sons of Taste! ye, touch'd by Nature's charms!
Who rush from pride and wealth, to Painting's arms;
Whose fancy high ascendant o'er your fears,
With Hope's gay tints, gilds toil-devoted years:

in the annals of the last century! What must have been its prevalence and its power, when an administration of twenty years continuance—commanding the energies of a mighty empire, and wielding treasures unexampled in the history of national opulence, could have passed off, without leaving on record, one public act of liberality or policy, towards the arts, the sciences, or the literature of their country. Of what other great statesmen—of what other great state can this be said?

“It is the want of rewards,” says Helvetius, “which occasions the want of talents of every description.” Great men will always come when they are called—when they are supplied with the motive and the means—when the occasion is worthy of the character, and the exertion is rivalled by the remuneration.

But where is the man of genius in the present day, who, out of the circles of politics and war, can point to any honourable distinction beyond the attainment of the vulgar and the vile, and say, Behold what my talents have obtained for me! Where is the poet—the artist—the man of science, who, sitting under the shade of his vine, and surrounded by the blessings of affluence, can say to aspiring youth, these, my grateful country has bestowed

Sees Genius crown'd by Fame, in Honour's eye, 315

Like Rubens live, and like Da Vinci die !

Direct your ardour and devote your Art,

To point some pleasing moral to the heart ;

upon me, as the reward of my labours and the means of my repose ?

Where is the "*otium cum dignitate*" for him who has deserved well of his country in arts, as well as for him who has distinguished himself in arms ?—the honourable asylum of national munificence, for the veterans of the lyre and the pencil—the invalids of Literature and Taste ; who in the face of penury and pride, have devoted themselves to the interests of public instruction and refinement—to the promotion of learning and virtue ? Alas ! there is no half pay for the legions of Apollo ; with worn out powers and exhausted hopes, they are abandoned, like Bellisarius, on the high-way of society, and live, only to lament the infatuation of their youth, and the ingratitude of their country.

But hint in public, or in private, the advantage that would attend a little liberality to this long neglected race—the propriety—the expediency—the necessity, of letting a crum fall from the profuse feast of national opulence, to satisfy the wants of Genius, and stimulate the failing powers of Taste : the porcupine of public economy is roused in an instant, he puts forth all his quills to defend the public purse from encroachment, and prevent the

To sway the soul as Virtue's cause requires,
And rouse in torpid breasts religion's fires : 320
But not for all that India's stores display,
To flatter vice, the Muse's power betray ;

impoverishment of the state. How the grave Catos of the day expatiate on the virtues of ministerial frugality, on the pressure of the times, and the burthens of the people ! What philosophical observations do we not hear, on the animating spur of necessity, and the invigorating influence of neglect ! But, if a political retainer is to be pensioned, if the avaricious venality of some party tool is to be gratified, at an expence, that would enrich all the regions of Taste, and rouse all the genius of the age, we hear no more of the virtues of frugality ; economy is suddenly in disgrace, and generosity is the virtue of a great nation. All voices join in chorus, to the propriety of rewarding liberally the servants of the public, and supporting the dignity of the state.

What, then ! are there no public servants but placemen, courtiers and politicians ? Are there no public services performed by those who exhaust their lives in the arduous pursuits of Art and Science, for the benefit of man, and the honour of their country ? Shall we call over the muster roll of the Muses, to compare it with the pension list of the day ? In the estimation of posterity, how many dull diplomatists, ex-clerks and sub-secretaries, would weigh

Nor passion's pander, lend the pencil's aid,
To fire the mine by lawless pleasure laid.

in the scale of utility or glory, against a Johnson or a Goldsmith, a Hogarth or a Barry !

Shall every understrapper of office, every subordinate and subservient of place and authority, wrap himself in the stipendiary cloak of national liberality, and under the arrogant and self-assumed title of a public servant, engross those funds of honourable remuneration, which all public talent, and all public virtue have a right to share ! While the venerable Artist, who has contributed to the wealth, the pleasure, and the improvement of society, shall solicit in vain, a miserable pittance, to save the palsied hand of age from the necessity of labour, and be driven to accept from the generosity of strangers that asylum, which had been refused to him in the country that he had adorned by his taste, and enriched by his industry.* While the

* Bartolozzi, at the advanced age of eighty-two, one of the most distinguished characters that ever adorned the annals of Art in any country, could not, (it is said) even through the intercession of his friends, obtain from our patriotic parsimony, a small pension, which the government of Portugal (a nation that never derived any advantage from his talents) out of respect to his genius had the liberality to bestow upon him.

Disdain the wretch, dishonour'd—damn'd to Fame!

Alike insensible to pride and shame! 326

With plodding hand, unpalsied, who can trace

His own, his patron's, and his Art's disgrace;

venerable bard who has maintained the cause of literature and morality, whose Genius, for half a century, has ministered to the instruction and amusement of the public; whose liberal pen has opposed every unfeeling prejudice, encouraged every generous sentiment, and strengthened every patriotic virtue, shall remain unregarded—unrewarded in the general prodigality of the day, and find the evening of an honourable and laborious life gloomed perhaps by embarrassment, and embittered by neglect.

Are these the excitements which a generous and judicious policy would hold out to the aspiring ability of the time? Is this the course of stimulants and provocatives, which state physicians prescribe, as the most invigorating regimen of Genius? Or are the Muses and Graces of society, marked out as the first victims to the new theory of population, and left to die off, for the convenience of trade, and to give elbow-room to politicians and philosophers? The "preventive check" has indeed been so much resorted to in critical economy, that it is surprising there should be an overplus population on the side of these discouraged casts; but the additional efficacy of neglect, insensibility, and exposure, will soon reduce this Parnassian fecundity within

Mean slave of vice ! who sins without desires,
Promotes her cause, and propagates her fires. 330
Pervert not powers for noblest purpose given,
Nor favour'd high, apostatize from heaven

the desired limits of civil sustenance, and social accommodation.

Line 329. *Mean slave of vice ! who sins without desires,*] —To the credit of the British School, this opprobrium of the pencil is almost unknown amongst the able and honourable Artists of whom it is composed. The depraved eye of sensuality must look to the profligate imbecility of other nations, for those degraded panders of the palette, who are content to court a prostituted patronage, by ministering to the vices of their employers, by gratifying the pruriency of Taste, and inflaming the fury of criminal desire.

There is no character in society so dangerous or reprehensible as he, who devotes his talents to licentious purposes ; who deliberately endeavours to shake the foundations of social virtue, and set the passions at war with morality.

He who yields to unexpected temptation, and falls a victim to the seductions of sense, though he may become profligate and depraved, will find some commiseration in the feelings of humanity, and perhaps some excuse in the frailties of Nature : he errs only in the mistaken pursuit of objects, which offer to thoughtless intemperance the delusions of pleasure and joy ; and the evil which

Reflect, though now forgot, her ancient fame,
Abused alike her office and her name ;

results to others, from his actions, though their consequence, is seldom their design. But he, who without the plea of passion or temptation—in the calm of retirement and thought, can dedicate his powers to the service of vice ; who can exhaust the resources of his fancy and the treasures of his taste, in furnishing excitements to immorality ; who can dwell day after day upon his work, with diabolical apathy, touching it to pernicious perfection, and contemplate without a feeling of remorse, the engine of evil, which he has so coolly prepared ; such a man is the scandal of his art, and ought to be the scorn of his age. He is a viper that envenoms the purest pleasures of society : he betrays the sacred cause which heaven, in giving him talents, committed to his charge, converts the ammunition of defence into combustibles of destruction, and turns the batteries of Genius against the bulwarks of Virtue.

Gifford, in his excellent translation of Juvenal, quotes, from Propertius, a few lines, which appear to be applicable to this subject :

“ Quæ manus obscænas depinxit prima tabellas,

“ Et posuit casta turpia visa domo ;

“ Illa puellarum ingenuos corrumpit ocellos.

“ Nequitiaque suæ noluit esse rudes.

“ Sed non immerito velavit aranea fanum,

“ Et mala desertos occupat herba deos !”

By fate exposed, in fortune's filthy strife, 335
And hustled in the common crowd of life ;
Reflect, what homage paid in purer days,
Times of true honour, and heroic praise !
Times, which our primers teach us to revere,
The vig'rous prime of man's terrestrial year ! 340
When glory fired, when Genius held the throne,
Ere money's mean democracy was known ;
Ere pride and wealth, with sordid cares combined
To level all the virtues of mankind ;
To pull down Talent's privilege, and degrade 345
Life's commerce, to a mercenary trade ;
Reflect, what homage then, at Painting's shrine,
At once confess'd and claim'd her powers divine :
What wreaths, of old, your graphic sires have graced,
And triumph in the dignity of Taste. 350

The pencil then, to generous hands consign'd,
Appear'd the grace and glory of mankind ;
The Bard, the Hero, and the Sage admired,
The state respected, and the prince inspired.
Time-honour'd Worth, to graphic skill allied, 355
Assumed the palette, as a crest of pride ;
Emblazon'd Art's pure emblems in his fame,
And felt ennobled, in a painter's name.

As rightful Sovereigns, when dethroned by fate,
 Preserve the monarch, in the meaner state ; 360
 Remember still, the source from which they spring,
 And speak, and act, but as becomes a King ;

Line 358. *And felt ennobled, in a painter's name,*]—This passage alludes to Fabius, a noble Roman, who (according to Pliny)* having painted the Temple of Health at Rome, assumed the name of *Pictor*, and considered it an honourable addition, to that of one of the most illustrious families.

We learn also, from the same Author, that the most elevated characters of ancient Greece, were desirous of studying the Arts of design, and that none but persons of noble blood were allowed to profess them.

If our legislators were disposed to confer on the nobility of the day, a similar privilege, it is to be feared, they have not quite so much respect for the Arts, as to take it for a compliment. Though an ancient noble Roman was proud to connect with his name, the character of a painter, and

* Apud Romanos quoque, honos huic arti mature contigit. Siquidem cognomina ex ea Pictorum traxerunt Fabii clarissimæ gentis, principesque ejus cognominis ipse ædem Salutis pinxit, quæ pictura duravit ad nostram memoriam. PLINY, L. xxxv. C. 4.

Thus, though obscured, as rude usurpers rise,
The ancient majesty of painting lies,
Let her high lineage fire your glowing heart, 365
To make your actions worthy of your Art.

as the Author, under the license of a poetical anachronism, has represented Fabius,

“ Assumed the palette as a *crest* of pride,”

it is by no means probable, that his example will be much imitated by modern patricians, or that we shall find the insignia of the pencil frequently emblazoned in the college of arms.

The little consideration indeed, which this most ancient, most honourable, most useful, and most ornamental art, obtains from the pride and apathy of modern times, is one of the most powerful causes of its decline, and reflects as little credit on the wisdom as on the refinement of our age. It has deprived the painter of that invigorating elevation of mind, which results from the consciousness of fulfilling a dignified function. His genius contracts within the narrow space of respect in which he is confined, and can no more expand to the gigantic measure of his ancient estimation.

He finds himself no longer an important personage in the great drama of society : the part he plays is excluded from the first cast of characters : the acclamations of the spectators, which he was accustomed to share with the hero, the sage, and the statesman, are now transferred to the pageants of wealth, and the harlequin of vanity ; and he

Genius and Virtue were by Heaven design'd,
 For mutual love, in holy league combined :
 Their powers in moral splendour to unite,
 And glow together still, like heat and light. 370

has reason to think himself lucky, if he is allowed to come upon the stage at all, and can pass off, without a hiss, in the procession of figurantes and scene-shifters.

Line 366. *To make your actions worthy of your Art.*]—In considering, and asserting, what is due to us from society, let us take care, that we do not forget what is due by us in return. However illustrious his descent from the ennobled family of Genius amongst the Greeks, the painter must not trust too much to his hereditary claims, or demand credit on the glories of his predecessors, while his conduct proves that he has degenerated from the stock :

“Miserum est aliorum incumbere famæ.”

If in the revolutions of Time and Taste, he has been deprived of his rank, and divested of the honours of his house, let him shew, that his spirit has not sunk with his fate, and that he still aspires to the virtues of his ancient station.

“Reverence thyself” is a maxim of moral efficacy far beyond the conception of vulgar minds : it is the defence of dignified feeling, against the mob of mercenary sentiments ; and a guard of honour round every elevated virtue.

He who does not respect, is always ready to degrade himself : he who has no property in self-esteem, thinks that

O! beauteous union ! spectacle sublime !
Unrivalled in the theatre of Time !
By mortal powers to gazing angels given,
For earth a triumph, and a treat for heaven !

he has nothing to lose in honour : he is a pauper in principle, who looks up with hatred to the luxury of reputation, and sinks into disgrace, without sensibility or shame.

It is not sufficient, that the Artist devote his powers to the attainment of excellence, he should, also, elevate his morals to the dignity of virtue, and refine his manners according to the decorum of civilized intercourse : he must reverence his Art not only in his pencil but his person, and resolve, at least not to degrade it by his meanness if he cannot dignify it by his talent.

The mien of a mechanic, and the manners of a clown, are as much out of place in the painting-room, as the drawing room ; and though they are occasionally to be found in each, they never fail to disgrace both.

Genius, like gold, may perhaps, sometimes, appear combined with gross and earthy materials, but it is only, when purified from the dross, that it receives the stamp of value, and shines in circulation. We lament to see talents in the low company of vulgar feelings ; and experience proves, that they do not often survive the influence of those debasing associates.

An Artist should be ambitious to live amongst those classes of his contemporaries, which are distinguished by

In thy conjunction, brilliant stars of mind ! 375
What beams of glory burst upon mankind !
Beyond the pomp of planets, or the show
Of Nature's wonders in the world below !

their taste, their learning, and their liberality : their society is his proper sphere ; and to be received by them with the respect which is due to his profession, he should prove, that he has a proper sense of his own dignity, and not belie in his appearance the impression of his works.

This is not the age in which a Diogenes can hope to shine. The disciples of the ancient patron of incivility have seldom been the ornaments of philosophy, and will never be the favourites of Taste. He who neglects the urbanities and disregards the decorums of society, will be considered a savage as well as a cynic, and consigned to his tub with the contempt which he deserves.

There is indeed, more sympathy between the dress of the mind and that of the body, than the fop or the sloven are willing to suppose ; and he who takes pride in a mean habit, will sometimes be found to take pleasure in a mean action. Though common honesty and vulgar virtue, are often seen "in homely garb array'd," yet all that is noble in sentiment, generous in feeling, and refined in taste, will rarely be found amongst those, who are content to wear the livery of rudeness, ignorance, and brutality.

But if the Artist be required to expel the low and the vulgar from his manners and appearance, how much more

Yet when this light appears, what vapours rise !
What envious clouds obscure it in the skies ! 380
Nations, unmoved, regard its brightest blaze,
And only, when extinguish'd, deign to praise.

earnestly should he endeavour to purify his mind from their contaminating influence ! It will signify but little, that the brand be removed from the surface, if it be allowed to sink into the soul.

In all professions, there are sordid characters, who, destitute of talent and integrity, are content to live without dignity or independence.

Reptiles of society, who lick the dust of pride, and crawl into notice, through all the tortuosities of intrigue, are common in every art ; it is not surprising therefore, that even amongst the flowers of Taste, they are to be found in all their creeping varieties.

But the homage paid to wealth by these pencil-parasites, though quite as disgraceful, is not so prejudicial to Art, as the incense, which they are ever ready to offer at the shrine of vanity. In every circle of virtù we behold them diligently plying the feather of adulation. Like satellites they circumsolve the primary planets of criticism, and accommodate their aspect to every eccentricity of Taste ! Even Genius, alas ! will sometimes stoop to fawn and depend upon his obsequiousness rather than his merit. But the mistaken flatterer is not aware, that he sanctions the dictates of arrogance by acquiescing in them, and assists in

When state-astronomers behold it shine,
They mark it, as a strange, malignant sign ;
A comet, that to courts portentous springs, 385
And turn aside the telescope of Kings.

the establishment of a tribunal, to which, he will be himself dragged as the first victim.

Surely, in the present day, the dignity of knowledge may be maintained ; the just claims of the Professor may be asserted, even with the firmness of an Apollodorus,* without any apprehension of his fate.

That the Arts have hitherto obtained so little general estimation in this country, may perhaps, be ascribed as much to this want of dignity and independence in the Artist, as to the general defect of knowledge and refinement in the public. How can we be persuaded to respect those who do not appear to respect themselves ? How shall we induce Society to honour a profession which many of those who practise are willing to degrade ?

It is in vain, to hold up the chin of him, who, like Falstaff, has an alacrity in sinking ; whose habits, manners and motives, are so many stones about his neck, to weigh him

* A celebrated architect in the time of Adrian, who not approving the opinions of that monarch respecting his Art, became obnoxious to the imperial critic, who first banished, and afterwards on false pretences put him to death.

To rule the breast, from vulgar bliss refined,
To touch with purer joy the polish'd mind ;

down to the foul bottom of society, and counteract the buoyant properties of his Art.

In the general struggle of all classes, for pre-eminence and distinction, few will be found so polite, as to preserve the place of him, who weakly or meanly recedes from his rank : and amongst those with whom wealth is the great object of veneration, his lot is not much to be envied, who without riches to purchase, power to enforce, or manners to conciliate respect, offers no other claim to attention than some skill in an Art little understood, and which he contributes to depreciate, by shewing it associated with ignorance, servility, and vulgarity.

It is unfortunate, that the two evils here noticed, the disesteem of the Arts, and the depression of the Artist, tend reciprocally to produce each other. The barren prospects of the painter, both as to honour and profit, deter persons of liberal education, in the higher classes of society, from assuming that character. The ambitious or the affluent, have little temptation to encounter a life of arduous and unremitting exertion, which offers no flattering hope of distinction, nor rational prospect of wealth.

“ In steriles campos nolunt juga ferre juvenci.”

The pursuits of Taste therefore, are in a great measure, left to the less prudent enterprize of those, who rising from the humbler regions of society, sometimes retain a charac-

To lead the eye to Nature, and unfold
 What wonders there, the favour'd few behold ; 390

teristic of their original station : with few advantages of education, and little ambition beyond that which prompts,

“ To live and thrive in ease and luxury,”

they too often consider the Arts only as a refuge from coarser labours, and are sometimes insensible to those enlightened views and liberal feelings, without which, he who has genius will not be respected, and he who has not genius, will be doubly despised.

Shall we, as a remedy for those evils, adopt the example of the Greeks, mentioned in a preceding note, and decree, that noble blood only, shall circulate in the veins of the painter ?—No ! Whatever effect such a restriction might have had amongst the ancients, there is great reason to doubt its purifying potency in modern times. Genius, though the gift of Nature, is not the gift of birth ; and however we may depreciate the qualities of that state, which is commonly called vulgar life, we must not forget, that the loftiest flights of glory have sometimes been taken from the lowest station.

“ *Plebeix Deciorum animæ plebeia fuerunt.*”

“ *Nomina.*”

JUVENAL.

The temple of the Muses should be open to all men : as the distinctions which they bestow are to be won only by toil and talent, it is not likely to be much frequented by

To check in man the animal's offence,
And lure the grovelling from the sty of sense;

those, who may look to more profitable preferment upon easier terms.

The order of merit in Art might become extinct, if an act of exclusion were passed against those, who from the unluring prospects of humbler life, are tempted to run all the hazards to which this desperate species of knight-errantry is exposed.

The Author conceives, that it would not be more absurd, to restrict the privileges of Taste by prejudice, to the higher classes, than it is impolitic to confine them by discouragement to the lower classes of society. He would wish therefore, to see the Arts restored to those honours which they have enjoyed in every other cultivated nation: he would claim for them that rank to which they are entitled by the common law of civilized man; by their office, their utility and their ancient fame: that rank which excites to glory, without inspiring pride, and in which Genius while it is distinction to the humblest, is not degradation to the most exalted character.

He would wish to see the pencil ennobled, not by patent, but by patronage—not in its professors, but in its powers—in its devotion to public objects, not in its application to private interests.

The Author has attempted to follow in the honourable track of those who have endeavoured to stimulate to noble

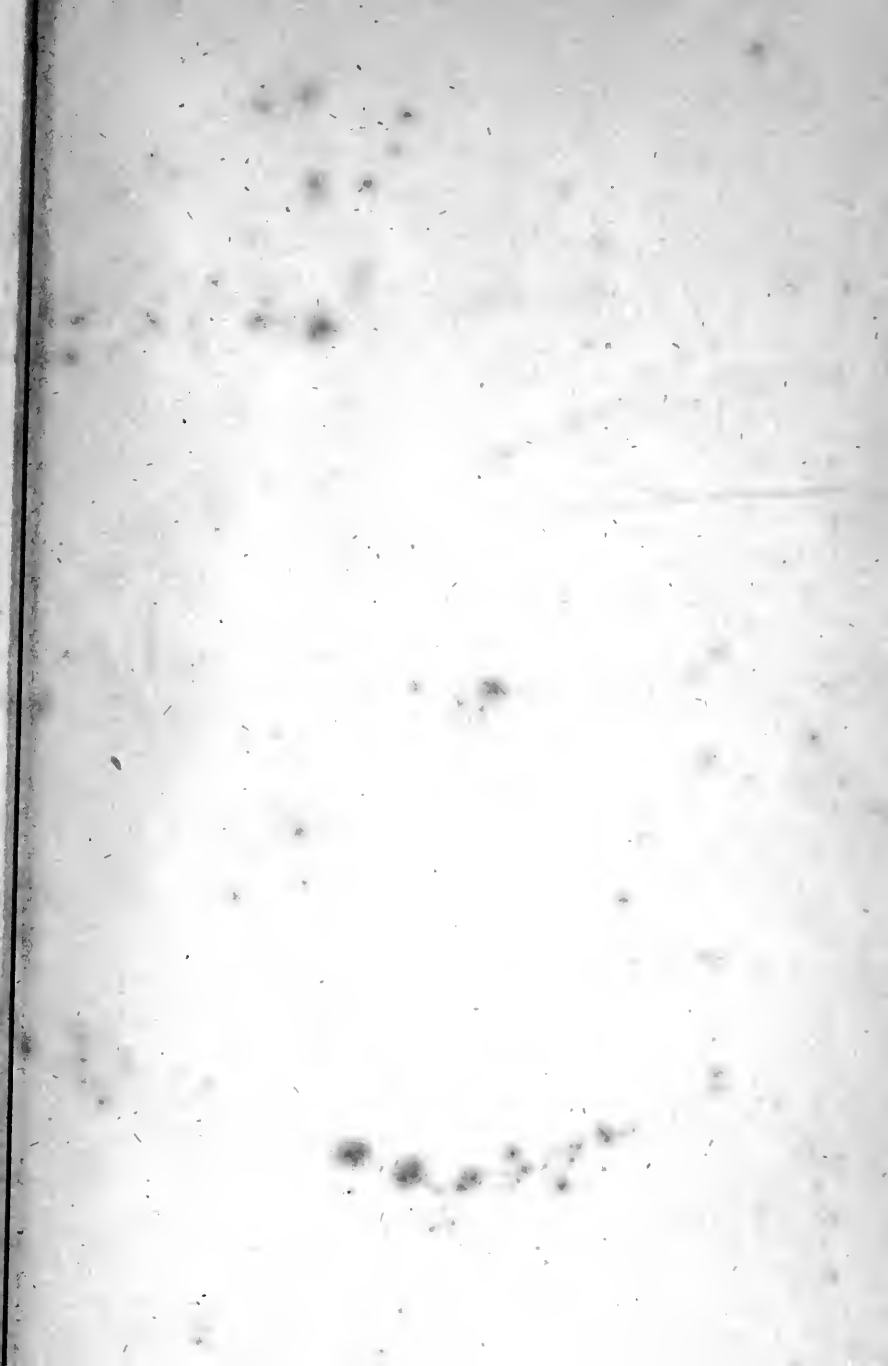
To charms that Fancy flings o'er life's dull waste,
That beam from Beauty, and abound in Taste.
Be these your aims, ye sons of Art! be these 395
Your hopes to prosper, and your means to please;
With generous ardour let your genius glow,
To leave some trophy of your fame below;

daring, the animated youth of Art. He has laboured to impress upon the Artist, the duty of respecting himself, in order that he may be respected: the necessity, of cultivating the intellectual, as well as the mechanical parts of his art; and of seconding the merits of the painter by the virtues of the patriot, and the manners of the gentleman.

He would now close his humble effort with a respectful appeal in favour of the genius that surrounds him, to the wisdom of the legislator, the policy of the statesman, and the munificence of the Sovereign. He would reverently claim for his meritorious comrades in Art, an honourable opportunity, of devoting their powers to those religious, moral, and patriotic objects, on which only, they can now be employed with dignity or effect. He would solicit for them, permission and means to contend with the aspiring pretensions of rival states; to co-operate with the splendid achievements of the hero and the patriot, and while transmitting her glories to future ages, to kindle the light of Taste in the accumulating lustre of their country!

In patriot toils, your country's raptures raise,
Promote her glory, and extort her praise ; 400
Deserve her love, and if she slight your claim,
Be your's the consolation—her's the shame !

THE END.





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Shee, (Sir) Martin Archer
Elements of art

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